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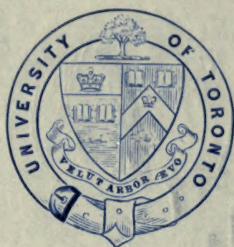
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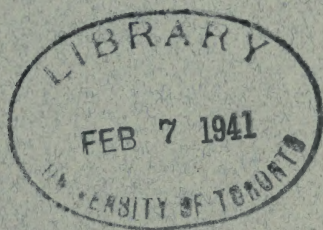
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# A Strong Army in a Free State.

A STUDY OF THE OLD ENGLISH  
AND MODERN SWISS MILITIAS.

By  
G. G. COULTON.



SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT & CO., Ltd.,  
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## PREFACE.

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It was observed recently by a writer in the *Times* that if the educated British citizen had known but a little more of African affairs the whole history of our dealings with the two Republics would have been changed, and war would in all probability have been avoided. This pamphlet is designed to correct the very widespread and mischievous misconceptions, countenanced at this critical time even by public writers and speakers, as to the real history of compulsory Militia in England and the working of a very similar system in modern Switzerland. If the first step towards an appreciation of our British Regulars is to get out of one's head all idea as to their being "mercenaries" in the usual reproachful sense, certainly it is still more necessary, in considering the Swiss army, to rid ourselves of all preconceived notions as to "conscription" in its French and German signification.

I must take this opportunity of expressing my heartiest thanks to the following gentlemen, who have been kind enough to supply me with valuable information, and even partially to revise my proofs\*:—Herr Theodor Curti, of St. Gallen, Member of the National Council and Leader of the Democratic (Radical) Party; M. C. Briquet, of Geneva, Adjudant de l'Artillerie de Position des Forts de St. Maurice; M. le Pasteur Marc Doret, Professor at the University of Geneva, and Capitaine-Aumônier to the First Division; M. le Colonel Camille Favre, author of the able articles on the Transvaal War published periodically in the *Journal de Genève*; Herr Hermann Greulich, of Zürich, National Labour Secretary; M. Alexandre Herzen, Professor of Physiology at the University of Lausanne; his son, M. Nicolas Herzen, Professor of Roman Law

\* See p. 27.

at the same University, and First Lieutenant in the 3rd Infantry Regiment ; M. Henri Lancel, Editor of the *Gazette de Lausanne*, and Captain in the Regiment of Mountain Artillery ; M. le Pasteur Charles Martin, of Geneva, Capitaine-Aumônier to the 5th Regiment of Infantry ; M. le Pasteur Ernest Morel, Theological Professor and Rector of the Academy of Neuchâtel, Capitaine-Aumônier to the 7th Regiment ; M. Charles Morel, of Lausanne, Pasteur de l'Eglise Libre ; M. le Colonel Nicolet, Commandant une Brigade d'Infanterie, Officier-Instructeur ; Herr Reinhold Ruegg, Editor of the *Züricher Post* ; M. le Colonel Edouard Secretan, Commandant la Seconde Division d'Armée, Directeur de la *Gazette de Lausanne* ; M. Ami Simond, of Yverdon, formerly Assistant-Master at King's College School and St. Paul's School, London.



# A STRONG ARMY IN A FREE STATE.

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## CHAPTER I.

“That is the way we muddled along in the old days!”—*Mr. Wyndham*, in the House of Commons, March 12, 1900.

THE country has passed during the past six months through a series of unpleasant surprises. Two small Republics, in spite of their doubtful cause, did not hesitate to go to war with us; and we at once found that we had enormously underrated their strength. Symons thought he could easily hold Dundee with 4,000 men; whereas White would never have held Ladysmith, even with his 13,000, but for the providential arrival of the naval guns. For ten Englishmen who once thought 50,000 men too many to send to South Africa, there is not one now who believes that we are over-doing it with our 200,000. We begged the Colonies *not* to send the very mounted contingents which we now know to be indispensable. But all these, however grossly incorrect, were, after all, only miscalculations. It was more serious that, by the despatch of only half the proper guns, brave men's lives were wasted to expiate the neglect and incompetence of officials in Pall Mall,\* and that, though for months the whole world had been talking of the imminent war, we had not on September 15 a single home battalion ready to take the field.† Worst of all, perhaps, is the fact that though we have called men from all our colonies and all our foreign garrisons to relieve the strain on our regular army, yet this expedition has reduced our home defensive forces to 94,000 fighting men in Regulars and Militia,‡ together with our Volunteers. These latter are a collection of

\* Sir C. Dilke, House of Commons, March 12, 1900: At a given moment, the full complement in South Africa should have been 360: we had then 186.

† Mr. Arnold-Forster, House of Commons, March 12, 1900.

‡ See the criticism of Lord Lansdowne's figures by Lord Northbrook in the March number of the *Nineteenth Century*.

heterogeneous bodies practically without central organisation, or transport, or commissariat; ill-trained to shoot, and armed in many cases with weapons discarded twenty years ago by the Regulars. Nobody doubts that, man by man, they would do their duty; but to bring them out against an organised enemy would involve a waste of time and money and blood terrible to contemplate.\*

This, then, and much more, the nation has seen and still sees; and this is the kind of experience from which no Ministry can save us, if we will not save ourselves. For it is not pretended that any other Government, as average Governments go, would have done any better. The nation has wisely refrained from making our failures into a party matter, and has only been pained to see Ministers adopting party lines of defence. Yet the fact that this serious state of things is no party matter simply emphasises its national importance. If we could only believe that another party would do better than this, in that belief we could find definite encouragement. But, on the contrary, this present Government has undoubtedly done something to increase the efficiency of our Army; and, bad as are our present deficiencies, we were probably better prepared last October than at any other time during the past thirty years. To go back further still, all our present mismanagement fades into insignificance when compared with the colossal blunders and criminal carelessness of Crimean times. Plainly, therefore, we want a change not of mere party Ministry, but of actual national policy. Our military preparations ought to be a national matter, independent of changes of Government, and sufficiently public, sufficiently intertwined with the daily life of the whole people, to grow automatically with the Empire's growth; instead of stagnating in a side current while the main life of the people flows on apart in other channels. For nobody dare seriously to assert that our present Army, filled as it is with healthy units, reflects in its organisation the vast stores of scientific and business experience amassed by the nation at large during the present century.

And yet—to leave one more instance in history of the extraordinary perverseness with which arguments are brought to defend any system which it requires a national effort to reform—the fact

\* For the difficulty, or impossibility, of turning our Volunteers at short notice into an organised army in the field, see Spenser Wilkinson, "The Volunteers and the National Defence." Constable, 1896.



of our *past* gross shortcomings is being used, even in the highest quarters, as an excuse for the rotten fruits which the same system has once again produced ! One can, indeed, just understand how the mass of the nation, having floated for generations on a high tide of prosperity, should look upon wealth and ease as the Briton's natural birthright, and forget that all lasting prosperity must be bought with labour and self-sacrifice, sometimes even to the death : should forget, in fact, that our present liberties and peace were bought with our fathers' blood. But for our statesmen, in open Parliament, to fall into so gross an error, or lend themselves to so gross a sophism ! A moment's attention to the plain facts of history will show us that if our ill-organised armies have generally on the whole—though not, be it remembered, without very painful exceptions—emerged from our former wars with honour, it was only because they fought against an equally or still more ill-organised enemy. And the most superficial student of foreign politics knows that want of military organisation is no longer the rule in Europe. Prussia, after her crushing defeat at Jena, set herself by a splendid national effort to regenerate her schools and her army at the same time.\* The German army has now become a model of organisation to the rest of the world, while the whole nation has gained enormously in strength of character from a noble effort made in a national cause. France, since 1870, has made the same sacrifices and spent the same pains on her army ; and if ever we unfortunately came into conflict with Russia we should find her as different from the utterly unprepared Russia of the Crimea as our present rifles are to the old musket of those days. Alone in Europe, England has followed a totally different course, whose "ripe fruits" (to borrow Mr. Wyndham's phrase) we are tasting at the present moment. To any thinking man the first question must at once be : Is there not something wrong with the system itself ?

For we, the people of England, must think this matter out for ourselves. No mere Government can secure the future for us, as none could defend us from the present shock. It was, perhaps, natural enough that, relying upon a large and highly paid staff,

\* For this connection between army reform and school reform, see Mr. Sadler's paper in the Educational Department's "Special Reports on Secondary Education in Prussia," 1899.

under a strong and able Government, we should have thought it the best wisdom to leave everything to them. This confidence has been rudely shattered; and not only have our rulers not shown themselves in full control of an efficient military organisation, but they have expressed the most naïve surprise that we should have given them credit for more foresight, more penetration into "a deal board," than ourselves. Nor is there anything to reassure us for the future in the way in which our Ministers deal with the present. They tell us that all our wars have begun badly, and this generation can expect no providential dispensation from a law of nature. Our Prime Minister appeals to the mysterious incompatibility between a strong military organisation and the British Constitution; he is astonished that, paying only a few miserable thousands per annum for secret service money, we should be disappointed at reaping no results. The Government Leader in the Commons philosophically disclaims any superiority over the man in the street. The Secretary for War excuses a deficit of 30,000 men in the Militia by explaining that "for many years past" it has not been up to its proper strength: on which principle we may gather double consolation from the thought that our Regular ranks, also, are never full. His Under Secretary comforts the Commons with a tale of how Bermuda was once left with a store of only three cannon-balls, so that if the Spaniards had fought us for only five minutes they must have taken a valuable British colony; after which he exclaims triumphantly, "That is the way we muddled along in the old days!" Lady Mary Wortley Montague is, indeed, recorded to have met a French friend's criticism on the state of her hands by retorting, "Ah, si vous pouviez voir mes pieds!" but we have a right to look for more solid comfort from our Ministers.

And yet they are *good* ministers, and that is just the worst of it! If these things are done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? Is it not time for the nation itself to look a little closer to the organisation of a national army?

There are still a few citizens whose simple faith looks forward to a thorough inquiry after all this, followed by some complete reform which will not merely sweep and garnish our house for seven worse devils to come and lodge in after a year or two. They observe how Mr. Wyndham himself, mixing earnest with jest according to the best Horatian recipe, pledged his word that "the outbreak of war



would never again find this country with such a small reserve of stores and munitions of war." The thing will be seen to ; we may make ourselves quite easy—as easy, in fact, as we were last year—until some other day we suddenly find the need of an army, and look round to see what has become of it ! A Commission will sit after this war ; but everybody's interest will be simply to patch up with as little inconvenient zeal as possible, since everybody is equally at fault for the present state of things—Liberals and Conservatives, Ministers and permanent War Office officials, and last, but not least, we, the nation, who have allowed ourselves in peace to forget the inevitable contingencies of war. For a couple of generations—not from all eternity, as most Britons seem to think ; very far from that—but practically for a couple of generations, our Army has been a purely voluntary affair. It has suffered from one of the commonest failings of human nature, except in times of great emergency. We have nearly all devoted our best energies to shirking it. And now it is suddenly as if, after some charitable collection, the doors had been locked and the money counted out under the contributors' noses. There was no want of charity at the meeting—for Brutus is a charitable man !—but the tangible result is something far short of sixpence per head. Britain is a warlike nation, and Britons never shall be slaves ; yet of able-bodied Britons between twenty and forty-five, not one in ten is doing even the most perfunctory form of military duty. The nation is almost as truly responsible for the present state of things as even the Ministry and the War Office. That is why, already in Parliament, the discussion has degenerated into mere exhibition sparring. How can one guilty party be expected thoroughly to expose another equally guilty, for the edification of an almost equally guilty nation ? No good can ever come of this future Army inquiry, unless the main body of the nation is in earnest to have the matter gone into thoroughly and unsparingly. Our politicians give us plainly to understand, for the most part, that they are impenitent. Newspapers of every shade have been in practical agreement to blame not only the childish excuses publicly advanced by grey-headed statesmen, but the flighty and irresponsible tone in which they have spoken of grave public matters. Even if some critics struck too high a note of alarm, a serious and dignified answer would have been far more effectual than those cheap and smart debaters' phrases which raise an inevitable suspicion of half-

sincerity even in the minds which might have enjoyed them as mere journalism. But many of us doubt whether the note of alarm was so much too high, remembering how many past wars, like this of the Transvaal and our last of the Crimea, have proceeded simply from misconceptions as to an adversary's strength and determination. Our relations with foreign Governments may be all that Lord Salisbury assures us they are; they may be even as cordial as our relations with France on the eve of that Fashoda incident, which kept our Embassy at Paris ready for weeks to depart at a few hours' notice. But the Press of Europe is devoting its best energies to advocating armed interference in South Africa; and in France, while public opinion is inflamed to an almost unprecedented extent, the existing Constitution is seriously threatened, and would almost certainly be replaced by a military despotism. It is quite insufficient for us to say that the chances are ten to one—or even a hundred to one—against an invader leaving England as he came. It is insufficient even for ourselves, since what sane business man would be content with a system which secured him only odds of a hundred to one that he would receive compensation in case of fire? Still less is it sufficient for the world without; for, next to *being* strong, by far the most important point is that we should be *known* to be strong. Whatever men think of the Majuba Convention, nobody doubts now that, as a matter of fact, the *idea* of our supposed weakness has had more influence lately in South African affairs than the *fact* of our latent strength. With a home army even approaching the Continental armies in organised numbers, we could have had no Transvaal war; Uitlander grievances would have been redressed—I do not discuss here whether justly or unjustly, but, at least, they would have been redressed—without the loss of a single life, Boer or British. Again, we are a little too apt to explain the present attitude of the Continent by mere envy. But, even setting aside our extremely disagreeable national manners (a cause seldom estimated at its real weight, though often spoken of), the theory of envy would at best only half account for the facts. Rome monopolised an incomparably larger proportion of the known world; yet, for aught we can see, she excited very different feelings in the other nations. However strong the apparent cause for envy may be, the feeling itself is multiplied tenfold by the addition of only a tiny dose of contempt. We are, in fact, constantly represented, and often with perfect conviction, as lucky impostors,



who have grabbed unfairly in the past and kept our winnings by sheer brazen bluff; and the envy of rival nations is kept up to fever-point by the continual and shifting uncertainties of the European situation, each country being distracted between the desire to be first in at the death and the fear of lending itself as a mere catspaw for the rest by pressing on too soon. Our present danger—our continual danger, so long as we trust to sudden emergency efforts when the crisis shall come—lies less even in any real weakness than in the appearance of weakness which we necessarily present.\*

We need to show the whole world quite plainly that there is nothing to be gained by attacking England. No purely volunteer system can do this; for volunteers in sufficient number never turn out in times of peace, and in times of war their want of organisation leads to terrible waste, not only of energy but of lives. We need, by taking a small toll of all the fittest citizens for home defence, to ensure for ourselves, and prove to our neighbours, that the national army has its due proportion of the business qualities, and the strength, and the energy in which the nation itself is so rich. If we want to make sure of keeping and successfully working our Colonies, we must make our position impregnable at home. As there is no financial prosperity without financial security, so neither of them can exist except on a basis of military security. And such a sound, businesslike basis, such a surely working and definitely organisable system, can never be built up on a foundation of purely voluntary service, any more than the whole business of the State could be worked on Mr. Auberon Herbert's suggested principle of purely voluntary taxation.

But it is idle to blink the fact that there is a prejudice in England against the idea of compulsory service. This prejudice may be summed up shortly in two sentences: (1) The thing is un-English,

\* The present writer has had recent experience of the extreme difficulty of explaining, even to impartial and not ill-disposed Continental observers, the real significance of the recent vote on the Militia ballot. Men who cannot be expected to know the exact details of that Act very naturally take its hopeless rejection as plain proof of such inertia or cowardice among the people at large as would quite neutralise the bravery of the few in South Africa; and it must further be remembered that enormous numbers of people—the 1,500,000 subscribers to the *Petit Journal*, for instance—have no means of knowing that we have shown ourselves other than cowards even in South Africa.

and (2) it is unfit for an essentially free people. I hope to prove in this place that both these objections rest on entirely false conceptions—on ignorance of our own history and of contemporary Europe.

## CHAPTER II.

“You are wandering on unknown ground.”—*Lord Salisbury* on the Militia ballot, House of Lords, Feb. 20, 1900.

THERE is no period of English history at which our armies enjoyed the same undisputed superiority as in the days of the Hundred Years' War. Crécy and Poitiers, in the words of a French historian, produced throughout Europe “a general impression of amazement, almost of stupor”; and he points out again how “the most famous general of the Middle Ages, Bertrand du Guesclin, never fought a great pitched battle against a real English army if he could possibly help it,” and was, in fact, beaten and taken prisoner in the only two such battles which were forced upon him.\* There is no other period in which quite the same praise could be given to the English Army. Yet the main cause of that superiority, as explained by this the most able special historian of the period, lay in the fact that Edward III. opposed to forces of brave men, managed on thoroughly happy-go-lucky lines, an army trained by the completest system of compulsory service organised by a first-rate European nation until modern times. So that, “although the name is thoroughly modern, yet the system itself was practised in ancient times by the very nation which knows least of it nowadays.”† It is worth while pausing to look closer at the system by which this English king won these English victories, the more so as it would be found to bear a remarkable resemblance to what we should now obtain by supplementing our present army with a compulsory short-service home militia on the Swiss (or, equally correctly, the Old English) system. The fourteenth century equivalent of our modern standing army was the body of nobles and retainers, the only men who might be called permanent professional soldiers, and who represented, roughly, the

\* Siméon Luce, “Bertrand du Guesclin et son Epoque,” pp. 124, 158.

† *Ibid.*, p. 126.



highest and lowest classes of freemen. To these, by a system of his own, Edward III. added considerable numbers whom he engaged by voluntary recruiting and drilled into professional soldiers. These were the forces he took abroad; but behind these he had a whole nation in arms. From the earliest historic times the English, like other Teutonic peoples, had been under the obligation of personal service. This militia was at different times increased in efficiency, and reached, in Edward III.'s reign, the highest point of organisation ever reached in the Middle Ages. Every man was bound to possess and use weapons on a scale varying with his wealth—from the complete outfit and retinue of a knight to the bows and arrows and pointed stakes of the very poorest. Thus armed, the people were trained also on a thoroughly practical system, under laws which were probably enforced as strictly as any in the Middle Ages. In 1337 the king forbade under pain of death any other holiday sport than archery; and all the upper classes were enjoined to make their children master the French language. Compare this with our own day, when even our Regulars are insufficiently trained in shooting, while the dead weight of public school tradition is still one of the worst obstacles to a real progress in modern language teaching. The comparison shows us, firstly, that the "un-English" idea of compelling every citizen to share all the responsibilities of his country—which responsibilities, until the world has changed almost beyond recognition, must always include the possibility of defensive war—that this "un-English" system is a prehistoric English institution, and found its completest expression at a time when English armies stood at their very highest in Europe; and, secondly, that these same peculiarly modern exaggerations of the voluntary system which have gone far to weaken our Army have had similar results in our public schools, where able and public-spirited men, working upon excellent material, confessedly produce most unsatisfactory results so far as mere teaching is concerned.

This glimpse of our own past is of special importance, since it will enable us to understand the extraordinary success of the modern Swiss system. Little as we may sympathise with mediæval ideals and with Edward III.'s ambitions, we may well feel it worth our while to study his combination of a professional army which swept France as Napoleon swept Europe, and a defensive militia which inflicted on the Scottish invaders one of the most crushing

defeats in their history. Nor did the military strength of England prejudice her liberties in those days: on the contrary, the period of the Hundred Years' War was one of great political progress; and England, with her strong army, was a far freer country than most others with their inferior military organisations.\* And, after all, however highly we may value our liberties as the most precious of all our gains during these five centuries, we need to remember that liberty, like all virtues, may be exaggerated into a vice. There ought to be no liberty for the citizen to shirk the main responsibilities of his nation, or to do badly the work which he is paid for doing well. And when, having pushed liberty in matters military and scholastic to their furthest limits, we are obliged to find serious fault with our performances in both fields, we may well ask ourselves whether the connection is merely accidental.

If we look again at Edward's system, we shall see that it seems to present, from the military point of view at least, a perfect balance between the voluntary and the compulsory ideals. There was a compulsory minimum: the citizen must not only pay his share of the taxes, but also take his share of that national defence without which the taxes might as usefully have been poured into the sea. Nor was this burden so heavy as it may sound. All students of mediæval history know that the pain of death threatened in the king's edict was not quite what it sounds, and that the

\* It is true that one of the causes of the Peasants' Revolt was the misery of the long wars; but this was not connected with the question of compulsory militia. On the contrary, no such complaint occurs among the rebels' grievances; and, in fact, there were at the same time far worse and more persistent popular revolts in France, which had suffered so much more in the war, partly from the very reason that no attempt had been made to organise an effectual national defensive force. In this imperfect world national freedom has few worse enemies than national defencelessness. The Hundred Years' War dealt the *coup de grâce* to the already expiring liberties of the French towns; while in England the same period is one of unprecedented growth in those municipal liberties to which we owe also so much of the freedom of our political constitution (Mrs. Green, "Town Life in the XV. Century," vol. i., pp. 12-34). Mr. Warburton also points out ("Edward III.," pp. 251, 252) that the real significance of Edward III.'s reign lies far less in its victories than in its social and political progress. And Edward I., the greatest organiser of the English compulsory militia, shares with De Montfort the glory of having founded the English Parliamentary system. These are facts very difficult to explain away.



net result was about what would be arrived at in modern England by a fairly strict system of "compulsory volunteering." Half the men would be as willing to shoot with the bow as to follow any other sport; and most of the rest would simply be taken away, to their own real advantage, from the pothouse bench or from watching more or less brutal sports on the village green, and surprised in the end to find that a man may be happy though "conscripted."

However, for good or for evil, the king insisted on this compulsory minimum, and beyond this he had his regular, and almost entirely voluntary, army. And the two were connected in a way which M. Luce seems to have been the first to point out. When Edward needed men, he did not call out his whole militia, but simply sent round to the local authorities for a certain picked proportion from each county or borough. These picked men (for their military efficiency would, at least to some extent, weigh in their choice) were sent to different depôts, and could not, in theory at least, be pressed for foreign service. But Edward paid his soldiers at a liberal rate: there was good prospect of rich booty, and no inconsiderable chance of promotion, for several of our best generals in those wars had risen from the ranks. Very many of these men who had been picked for home defence—skilled marksmen and adventurous spirits—must have chosen the soldier's trade; and thus, by a happy and automatic process—by an anticipation of Napoleon's and Carlyle's "the tools for him who knows how to use them"—our regular army was fed, through all its ranks, by much of the best fighting blood in the nation. Theoretically the system seems pretty nearly perfect; practically it achieved results that no Englishman can afford to neglect.\*

Nor was this policy confined to a single period only. The principle of compulsion has been constantly with us through almost every generation of our history. It may even be said that our successes in every age, both by sea and land, have been pretty

\* The whole sixth chapter of M. Luce's book is so interesting, and so extraordinarily applicab'e to present history, that it is well worth careful perusal. The Duke of Devonshire, for instance, might have found there an immediate satisfaction of his doubt, expressed in the House of Lords (February 20th, 1900), as to "how compulsory service for the Militia can be the foundation of a system which in every other respect rests upon voluntary service."

nearly in proportion to our frank enforcement of this compulsion.\*

Our present freedom from the responsibility of self-defence, which seems to us a law of nature, is simply the product of a couple of generations of exceptional prosperity—a brand-new product, and one of very doubtful value either from the practical or from the moral point of view. The higher and upper middle classes supply most of our officers, the lower classes most of our men; and the enormous population between those two extremes, with all its wealth and latent energy, supplies perhaps one-half of our Volunteers. If we are proud that the foreigner in England finds himself treated very nearly like a citizen, let us remember that this is partly because the ordinary citizen performs so few national services that the veriest alien can scarcely do less. Our citizens simply pay their share of the taxes, and vote every now and then when they care to take the trouble. How can it be good for the country that an overwhelming proportion of the population should grow up with a very vivid conception of their liberties and rights, while nothing ever forces them seriously to consider their responsibilities? It must further be noted that by this modern English doctrine, that nobody may be put under any personal compulsion when once his schooldays are past, it is precisely the most ignorant classes, and the most in need of an outward rule of discipline, who escape earliest from the pressure of healthy coercion. A studious boy of the pick of the nation is not his own master until his nineteenth year, or later; a gutter snipe may escape from discipline heaven only knows when! It depends partly, even nowadays, on the magistrate's willingness to carry out the school laws. To many of us this seems somewhat alarming for the future of the nation: a thing to be

\* House of Lords, February 20th: "Lord Blythwood . . . reminded their Lordships that the armies in the Peninsula were fed by the militia raised by the ballot, and that the Duke of Wellington had stated that Waterloo was won by the militia battalions. Those battalions were raised by the ballot." And, after Jena, this English militia was quoted by the great organiser Scharnhorst as an example to encourage Prussia in her efforts to raise a citizen army. (Bebel: "Nicht Stehendes Heer sondern Volkswehr," Stuttgart, 1898, p. 66.) It is notorious, again, that Nelson's victories were won by crews of whom large proportions had been pressed, so that without compulsion we could have had no Nile or Trafalgar.



fought against stoutly, and with the best ultimate hope of success; since, after all, the really un-English thing is not the acceptance, but the shirking, of an obvious and manly duty. Yet to Lord Salisbury's statesmanlike eye the inevitable end is at hand. He gathers his favourite nephew and his trusted emirs round him on his carpet; and there they sit with veiled faces, and await with the courage of despair the predestined "workings of the English Constitution." Our Premier frankly admits that he would like to see the nation capable of making some sacrifice to guard against future crises; he acknowledges that in this particular crisis we cannot in the least calculate the results of the Ministerial "emergency proposals," but compulsory service is impossible—"it is the will of the people, and it is not to be disputed." Kismet!\* Not a word to remind us that the nation has never won anything worth speaking of in the past but by some form of compulsion; and although this is clearly pointed out a few days later by Lord Blythwood, yet Mr. Wyndham, weeks after this, jauntily alludes to "conscription, the Militia ballot, and other such *new* devices." Just for one short moment—for two generations are a mere drop in the stream of time—the British people have been able to forget with impunity their natural and inevitable responsibilities, resting under the shade of their fathers' laurels. Therefore no Minister who values his majority in the House dare risk the proposal that we should form up into rank again, and advance with the advancing world. A wise politician always considers the susceptibilities of his people, as wise old Polonius dealt tenderly with Hamlet. The Premier fools us to the top of our bent!

Take, again, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. He, too, cannot believe that the people will face compulsory service; he, too, fears the mysterious workings of the Constitution; and he proceeds to reassure us in our inertia by arguments which would have aroused in poor Charles Lamb an unquenchable desire to "feel his bumps." It is a small thing that he argues against the possibility of sending conscripts to the Colonies, inattentive to the fact that nobody proposes abolishing our Regulars, and that those Regulars have in other times found many of their best recruits among conscripted men. But he holds that "the personal duty of the defence of the sanctity of our country and homes ought to be the duty of every

\* House of Lords, February 15th.

man capable of carrying arms," he will not have it "committed only to the few"; yet somehow he argues *against* a system which would ensure the enrolment of "every man capable of carrying arms," and *for* the existing organisation, which under any conceivable modification must still leave our sacred homes to be defended by less than a tenth of the able-bodied males who dwell therein!

Again, Sir Henry urges with special emphasis the fact that the wildest alarmists during the past thirty years never contemplated our needing in South Africa even half of the soldiers we have now sent there; and the cry is still for more. Plainly, then, he means to persuade us not to neglect an obvious method of multiplying our present Army—an insurance for the future against such inevitable miscalculations as this which he so mercilessly exposes in the past. On the contrary, he somehow passes on to argue that we can hobble along on the old lines, by merely offering such "fresh inducements for recruits" as nobody pretends would suffice even to increase our present numbers by 50 per cent.! Nay, more, within a quarter of an hour after his explanation of the necessary uncertainty of such calculations, we find him recommending that we should calculate our forces for home defence strictly on the basis furnished for us by a committee of experts, instead of raising "a preposterously large force which you would never require." Because, that is, our present needs nearly treble our wildest anticipations, therefore a late Secretary for War advises us to restrict ourselves, for the protection of the country's very existence in case of naval failure, to the bare numbers anticipated by such a committee as would inevitably have misled us hopelessly in our preparations for the present war.\*

And again, on the subject of our two lines of defence, Sir Henry employs a fallacy so fatal and yet so familiar that it is worth a moment's separate attention. Our Navy, of course, is our first line; our Army only the second. Are we, therefore, to jump to Sir Henry's conclusion that we have no use for our home Army until our Navy is "overwhelmed and possibly destroyed," or until "the Fleet may be temporarily disabled, or some other calamity of that sort may befall us"? On the contrary, a moment's serious reflection will

\* It is worth while referring to this argument in the *Times* report, and, in fact, to the whole speech, in order to see what reasons our rulers think good enough for a people assumed to be sunk in inertia, and anxious only not to be waked from their dreams.



show us that the primary use of a fleet is *to act as a fleet*, and not to cover the weakness of a neglected land force. So long as we complacently argue, with Sir Henry now and with so many others before the lessons of this war, that if our Fleet were overwhelmed "no armed force we could have in this country could save us"—so long, then, our Fleet must remain only half a fleet, for half its work will be to play nursemaid to the Army. The whole issue of a great decisive battle by sea might easily turn on the absence of, say, only ten or a dozen ships which our present system must keep hanging about our shores to guard against sudden raids: in plain words, the weakness of our land defence might easily involve the destruction of that very Navy behind whose skirts the Army is always taught to hide itself. Then, it is true, no such army could save us! Yet, to suppose the absence of only ten or twelve ships on this work is to put the estimate extremely low; and again, this is only one of the many obvious ways in which our Navy is at present hampered by the weakness of the Army. The borrowing of naval guns all through this war, the losses of the Naval Brigade at Graspan, are not yet forgotten; and similar not only possible but almost inevitable cases might be multiplied *ad infinitum*. Our Navy can never be itself till our homes can take care of themselves.\* What becomes, then (even if we blink its inconsistency with previous arguments), of Sir Henry's objection that compulsory service would give us a preposterously large force which we should never require? It would give us, on the Swiss system (as will presently be seen), about a million and a quarter of soldier citizens—practised shots, and ready for instant mobilisation, and with more than the same number of Reserves in the background,

\* Another important consideration is too often blinked by those who think that we may neglect our land defences so long as we have our present Navy. We can build ships to almost any extent, but it is not so easy to man them; and already we have heard ominous warnings as to the difficulty of mobilising our Naval Reserves, and the need for a further body of Naval Volunteers (*e.g.* Admiral Close, in the *Morning Post* for March 7th). There is undoubtedly much truth in the remark of a speaker in the German Reichstag (*Times*, March 29th, p. 3), who "thought that England would find great difficulty in continuing to increase her naval defences." If foreign nations continue to work as earnestly as they are avowedly working at present to destroy England's preponderance by sea, there must soon come a point at which we can only keep up the proper balance by devoting more of our energies to maintaining a land army which shall bear some sort of proportion to theirs.

without counting our Regulars and our Navy ; and, after the lesson of the Transvaal War, what army or coalition of armies would dare to come over and try conclusions with that defensive force, even though we had not a dozen ships on the seas ? And as to the question of corn supply, admittedly serious enough, could we not trust an Administration which organised a real defensive army to organise also the food reserves which would be as obviously necessary as reserves of powder and shot ?

Surely some such reflections must have presented themselves, at odd moments, even to the minds of our Secretaries for War. But they see that John Bull is full-fed and lazy, and nobody has sufficient faith in his fundamental good sense and patriotism to risk the rousing of him. Did not Walpole hold the Premiership longer than anyone else in history, and was not Walpole's motto "Let sleeping dogs lie" ? It is true that he was but a second-rate War Minister ; but as it was in his day, so it is in ours. The nation is thought to object to compulsory service ; and, instead of trying to convert us, Ministers find any argument, even the most self-contradictory, good enough to soothe us with. They fool us to the top of our bent ; and the worst is that it has been our fault as much as theirs. A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land : the prophets prophesy falsely, and the people love to have it so.

And what will ye do in the end thereof ? Among the few responsible persons who whisper "Go on !" not one has yet dared to stand forward and cry "Come on !" And we are left to face the question at present for ourselves, and to show ourselves real men of business, less eaten up with sloth and cowardice than our good neighbours believe. Our Navy cannot be more truly our first line of defence in war than a man's constitution is his first defence against disease. Yet what sick man argues with the doctor, "If my constitution is strong enough, I shall get over this all right ; and if not, no medicines can help me through" ? It is true we have a religious sect in England who argue on these lines, and we periodically imprison them for manslaughter.

Again, let us guard against the still worse form of self-deception which regards it as unpatriotic even to hint that the sacred soil of England could ever be in danger. It is true recent events have made this kind of talk less common ; but a nation soon forgets. It is almost forgotten already how the Channel Tunnel scheme



aroused a sudden alarm of invasion among the very people who are usually loudest in their unthinking refusal to consider military precautions. If that scheme never gets any further, it will at least have done national service in revealing the reality of a widespread feeling which it is often convenient to deny.

National insurance, therefore, is imperatively necessary; an insurance not merely "against fear," in Mr. Wyndham's words, but against real dangers, if only those induced by our apparent weakness. And the measures offered by Government—diffidently enough, as their own muttered complaints and their miserable arguments show—cannot really meet the situation. We know now that if at this moment only half those men were to come forward whom we should be glad to have under arms in times of European war, their demand to be armed and organised at once would be a far more serious embarrassment to the Government than to our enemies. Indeed, many of us have already suspected that, if the authorities are so unwilling to sanction any such "preposterous numbers," it is mainly because the raising of any considerable forces would at once lay bare the utter absence of proper arms, of proper anything, on a scale commensurate with the real necessities of national defence.\* Now, at least one effect of the revival of the old English national army would be this, that it would automatically audit the national military accounts. The statutory obligation to produce and drill so many men per annum affords the best possible guarantee that arms and a system of drill do exist for these men in time of need; while an organisation which spreads its roots into every household in the kingdom can be watched and checked in its workings to an extent quite impossible under our present system of disorganisation† The most businesslike nation in Europe has at present the least businesslike military organisation, and therefore, so far, the most truly "un-English."

Un-English again, in every true sense, and contrary to any true

\* See not only the specific complaints of Volunteer disorganisation in the House of Commons during the debate on the Estimates (March 16th), but Lord Lansdowne's own cry of abject distress at the idea of having 100,000 new militiamen thrown upon the War Office to be armed and trained (House of Lords, February 20th).

† See lower down, pp. 40, 41, for the abuses in the separate cantonal armies which were first discovered and remedied by the national centralised system in Switzerland.

conception of the working of our Constitution, is this system of bidding for more soldiers in the labour market, in order that the mass of our citizens may still avoid the burden of self-defence. The happy balance of our Constitution has always been maintained by a proper proportion between privileges and responsibilities; nor is anything more calculated to disturb that healthy balance, and to form a socialistic party drawing its strength not from reasoned political principle but from long-indulged idleness and irresponsibility, than the perpetual consecration of a state of things, essentially modern and accidental in their character, under which nine Britons out of ten pass through life without a single serious call to self-sacrifice for a national cause. For to expect Volunteer forces to drill all through a generation of peace in the numbers which would be required for war is to expect the people itself to show far more initiative, far more foresight, than any Ministry, Liberal or Conservative, has yet given an example of to the nation; while in times of emergency, even with the help of a great wave of popular feeling, it is confessedly impossible by raising the rate of pay to count on any even approximately calculable proportionate increase of recruits.\* And in a far worse and deeper sense this system is out of harmony with the best traditions of the British Constitution. It introduces more and more of the mercenary spirit into our Army; and we have already public complaints that the "emergency" men are being paid on a scale which is unfair to our older soldiers. Again, it cannot be healthy for the national spirit that our military should mark on the one hand a continued reluctance of the ordinary citizen to serve personally, and on the other a higher and higher price set upon the services of the professional soldier. If it were possible for the system to go on like this, we should first hear querulous complaints that the soldier, like the domestic servant, demands ruinous wages and even then does not "know his place"; and presently we should arrive at that very state of Roman subjection to a Prætorian Guard which is held up (quite

\* How little "emergency" proposals can be depended on to produce their calculated effect may be seen from a letter in the *Times* of March 24th, where the Colonel of the London Scottish points out that, for his corps at any rate, "in a year when extended training seems necessary . . . the net result of the War Office proposals is a *diminution of the time of training combined with an increase of expenditure.*"



falsely, as I hope to show) as a tendency of compulsory service. If we believe such a consummation impossible in England, it must only be because we believe that the nation will soon see the folly of waiting supinely until a crisis is upon us, and then raising "emergency" soldiers by offering "emergency" pay or privileges.

But I have already gone on too fast; for the present I am dealing with the first consideration, the accusation of "un-English." I have tried to show not only that compulsory service was bound up with that which is most English in our past history, but also that the abandonment of it has been an abandonment of one of the healthiest principles of the English Constitution. I will only add here that it is a system honoured in those English colonies of which we are so proud, and which in this respect set us an example that may well put the mother country to shame.\* There is one further sense in which the thing is essentially English, or rather British, for by no other system can we hope to defend and quietly civilise the vast districts which British enterprise has already colonised; and if we persist in our present inactivity those colonies will some day be torn from a nation unable to defend them, or will repudiate of their own accord a mother country so forgetful of the manly traditions which once inspired her, and still inspire them.

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### CHAPTER III.

"We have not disguised the loathing which conscription (veiled or unveiled) inspires in the breast of every good Liberal, if not of every good Briton."—*Speaker*, February 17th, 1900.

So much, then, for the "un-English" nature of compulsory service; and now for its alleged incompatibility with freedom. This objection

\* "Mr. Lyne, the Premier, explained that there were 200,000 males in New South Wales between eighteen and forty-five years of age available for military service, and 90,000 who could carry firearms and use them. The Premier suggested that the best way to prepare a defence force was to make the drilling of schoolboys compulsory. By this system, he estimated, 16,000 trained youths would be turned out yearly." (Reuter telegram from Sydney, March 6th, 1900.) And, again: "In New Zealand there are 75,000 male adults, and Australia has 300,000, most of them drilled and capable of bearing arms." (Speech of the Premier of New Zealand to the fresh contingent on its departure for South Africa, reported in the *Daily Telegraph* of March 20th.)

also will be best met by concrete example; and, as we have already seen how what was perhaps the freest state of Europe in the fourteenth century had also the most elaborately organised compulsory militia, so we may be less surprised to find on the Continent in our own times an essentially liberty-loving state which submits to the same system.

Switzerland is, and long has been, as free a country as any in the world: her traditions of manliness and liberty are as ancient and deep-rooted as our own. Yet she has not only kept, but elaborated from generation to generation, the compulsory service which we latter-day Britons are thought to be so anxious to forget; and Swiss citizens of all political parties (with that most insignificant exception which will be mentioned later on) are convinced that their military system works not against, but definitely for, freedom. If there is any party in England to whom this ought to give food for reflection, it is the Liberal party; yet the *Speaker* boldly claims that all true Liberals must loathe the very thought of compulsory service. It seems strange, but the answer is very simple—that the writer in the *Speaker*, like most Englishmen, has probably not the vaguest idea of the real working of the Swiss national army, and simply confounds it with the French and German systems. Yet Frenchmen and Germans are fully aware of the difference; and in both those countries the advocates of recent proposals to imitate the Swiss system have been rightly thought far more revolutionary than a man is thought in England who advocates that same system. There is a river in Macedon, and there is a river at Monmouth; but here the comparison pretty well ends. The first requisite for a real appreciation of the Swiss army is to put aside any preconceived notions as to its similarity to the ordinary Continental system.

This small nation, just short of three millions, can put into the field for home defence an army of nearly 150,000 men, with an armed reserve of over 130,000—a force which, by the admission of foreign experts, can be more rapidly mobilised than any other Continental army. Multiplied by ten, to allow on the one hand for our larger population, but on the other hand for the numbers who would join our Regulars and Navy, a similar system would give us an active defensive force of nearly a million and a half, ready to turn out at any time in co-operation with



our regular forces by sea and land, and backed up by an almost equal body of Reserves. And this, so far as *natural* qualities were concerned, would be an army of picked men, chosen by a medical inspection a good deal stricter than that which is applied to our Regulars. If these numbers seem excessive, I would plead for a short suspension of judgment; merely reminding the reader that, whereas it is difficult to find instances in history of a nation embarrassed by the multitude of its defenders, we need not look far to find a nation painfully anxious to raise another 100,000 men, and not very certain how she will get them. At present the main point is that the Swiss raise their formidable army by the simplest possible means, and by laying on the citizen a burden wonderfully light in comparison with the results obtained. By law every adult Swiss is liable to serve; in practice the doctors select only about fifty-two per cent. of the strongest and fittest, and the remainder pay a tax instead.\* As a matter of fact, this tax is not exacted from the very poorest, and the rest bear it cheerfully as a natural national burden, for which they know they get their money's worth.† Perfect liberty is allowed to a citizen in the matter of travelling or residing abroad; he is relieved of all duty of personal service during his absence, but must, of course, pay the tax in most cases if he wishes to retain his citizenship.‡

\* Even these, as will presently be seen, would have to turn out in case of invasion, but mostly as supernumeraries. They pay, during the time they would otherwise have been serving personally, a yearly poll-tax of 5s., together with an income-tax of about 4d. in the £.

† For a French observer's admiration of this cheerful public spirit, see p. 335 of Commandant Manceau's "*Armées Etrangères*" (Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1900). The author is palpably unjust to the English Army; but the portion dealing with Switzerland is, according to competent Swiss testimony, excellent.

‡ M. Cornély, in the *Figaro* of February 13th, wrote to dissuade England from the thought of "conscription"; his article was quoted by all our papers, and applauded by most. It was not observed, however, that the writer evidently thought only of compulsory service in its usual Continental form, and that *not one* of his arguments are in any way applicable to the Swiss system; least of all his apparently most convincing reason, that England's colonising superiority is due to her freedom from conscription. A Swiss may emigrate when he chooses, do what he chooses in any part of the globe, and merely pay his arrears of army-tax when he comes home again. I had hoped, but for want of space, to reprint the whole of M. Cornély's article, in order to show its complete inapplicability to Switzerland, and the extremely vague ideas on the subject which could allow so many English papers to hail it as a counterblast to compulsory service in general, instead of a

In his twentieth year, then, the Swiss youth goes up for examination, scholastic and medical. So uniformly excellent are the elementary schools, that practically none but the idiots and weak-minded fail in the former, which turns on (1) reading, (2) simple composition in the form of a letter, (3) mental and written arithmetic. In the physical test, however, we have seen that only 52 per cent. are successful. These are called out for the next "recruit school" held in their district, where they are put through a training in barracks, varying in length from forty-five days (infantry) to eighty (cavalry). For the first thirteen years of his service the citizen belongs to the "Elite," and is called out every other year for a "course of repetition" varying (according to the arm) from a fortnight to eighteen days. The cavalry only are called out every year, for ten days. In the intermediate years the soldier shoots, at his own leisure, a minimum of fifty rounds at the most convenient butts, but under strict Government conditions; in default of which he will be called out to go through, at his own expense, and at the place and time fixed by the authorities, a musketry school of three days.\*

mere *exposé* of the vices of the system in its most exaggerated forms, still further aggravated by the domination of an alien caste. See below, p. 34; and, for a further distinction between the Swiss and other Continental armies, the notes on pp. 23, 30, 31, and 32.

\* As a matter of fact, the volunteer rifle practice enormously exceeds the compulsory minimum. In 1898, 163,409 did their shooting voluntarily, as against only 2,493 who were called to the musketry school. In addition to these, there were 49,248 volunteer members of shooting clubs, including 2,166 cadets. Adding to these figures the 75,000 "Elite" and "Landwehr" who did their training that year, we see that there were 290,000 men who shot at the butts. The same proportion in England would amount to over 3,100,000 compulsory marksmen, together with 640,000 more (or nearly double the total of our whole Volunteer forces) who shot entirely of their own free will. ("Bericht des Eidgenössischen Militärdepartements über seine Geschäftsführung," 1898 p. 59.) These figures take no account of the voluntary shooting done, over and above the compulsory fifty rounds, by those who are here counted on the compulsory list. The rifle is to the modern Swiss what the longbow was to the English citizen. See Adams and Cunningham, "The Swiss Confederation," for a description of the ordinary citizen as "a soldier sportsman," who learns more from his own voluntary practice than from compulsory training. Major Manceau, again (p. 318) emphasises this essential feature of the national life: "National shooting competitions, cantonal competitions, parish competitions, competitions for officers and for non-coms., for boys and for old fogies. Even ladies are allowed to compete." See also a letter in the *Spectator* of February 24th, 1900, where a resident in Singapore describes how the Swiss form rifle clubs wherever they go.



These are the military duties of the able-bodied Swiss citizen from his twentieth to his thirty-second year inclusive. For the next twelve years he falls back from the Elite to the Landwehr, or first reserve. Here he is called out every fourth year only, for from eight to eleven days at a time. During the other years he must do his shooting classes as in the Elite, and he must keep his arms and accoutrements fit and ready for inspection at any moment. With his forty-fifth year he passes into the Landsturm, or second reserve, which is composed of the whole body of citizens between seventeen and fifty (except, of course, the hopelessly incapable, the Elite, and the Landwehr). The Landsturm is never called out but in case of war or other desperate emergency. A considerable proportion are armed, the rest are utilised as porters, etc.

Thus, though the citizen is never allowed to forget his duty of helping in the defence of his country, the actual time required of him is very short. The overwhelming majority serve in the infantry, and the whole infantry service totals only 174 days, or less than half a year. A man who has reached his fiftieth year is no longer liable to serve even in case of war, and has spent *less than a hundredth part* of his life upon a duty which assures the freedom and prosperity of the country.

And not only a duty, but to most a real pleasure also. You will find unanimous testimony to the fact that in the great majority of cases it is the *rejected* candidate who curses his fate.\* "He goes home with his tail between his legs," said one gentleman to me; and another, "One of the greatest disappointments of my life was when one of my sons failed to pass the test." The drill is hard work while it lasts; but the Swiss, like the English, are not afraid of hard, manly work in the open air. The army is extraordinarily popular, as a similar army would be in England.

Nor does it seem, to a layman at least, difficult to fit in such a system with our present institutions; unless we must already treat as a sacred national institution our questionable modern habit of paying far more respect to the personal freedom of an urchin just escaped from a Board school than to that of a University man on the point of taking his degree. Why should we not

\* This same fact, in its contrast to French experience, is dwelt upon by Manceau, p. 341.

put the choice before every man of twenty—either join the Navy or the Regulars, or you will be liable to compulsory short service in the Militia? If, like the Swiss, we rejected and taxed about 50 per cent., we should at all times have a quickly mobilisable force of about 1,500,000 men, with nearly as many Reserves behind them. If it is true that these numbers would be embarrassing, not only to the present War Office, but even to a more businesslike organisation, then nothing would be easier than to make the test still more stringent, thus reducing the cost of the army and increasing the number of contributors.\* But all Swiss evidence (as will be seen lower down) is so overwhelming in favour of the value of military service for national education, that one may well be permitted to doubt whether, if it were once tried in England, there would be any wish on the part of Government or nation to curtail the number of recruits. From the purely military point of view, again, it may be as well to remember that we are now finding employment in South Africa for numbers which once seemed ridiculous; how much more likely is this to hold good in our own country, where the transport and commissariat question would be so infinitely simpler!

But what is this Swiss army worth as a fighting force? Here, again, the ordinary English mountain traveller's experience can only be misleading. The thriving towns and large villages supply far the best material to the army; in the mountains the peasant is too often stunted in body and mind by generations of an unequal struggle

\* The Swiss army in 1898 cost barely over a million pounds (deducting an extraordinary expense of £40,000 for fortifications). Our own Volunteers alone, with this year's emergency vote, will cost the nation a million and a quarter, together with considerable private expenses. Yet the Swiss have for this money at least 20,000 or 30,000 more men than we can have this year, beyond comparison better drilled and organised, and with the highest daily pay and best food of any Continental army. The difference is simply that between an exceptionally happy-go-lucky and tangled system and a system organised by the business men of the nation for national use and national inspection. If we proved ourselves as good business men as the Swiss, our force of nearly three million fighting men would cost us (making allowance for dearer prices in England) about fifteen millions a year, no inconsiderable fraction of which would be covered by the contributions of those who did not fight. Even if we so decreased the fighting numbers and multiplied the contributors as to relieve the Budget completely of extra charge, we should yet have some four or five times our present defensive force, and in a very different state of readiness for the field.



against pitiless natural forces, and demoralised to boot by the thoughtless generosity or the haggling meanness of an ever-changing swarm of tourists. Those who know only the mountains have about as true a conception of the real people as an American would form of England from a short experience of University hotel-keepers and college servants, and turf loafers at Newmarket. The Swiss nation, like our own, has amassed a treasure of social and political freedom, not by a brand-new paper Constitution, but by the slow struggles of centuries; not by the violent revolutionary elimination of any one element, but by the steady, unwasteful friction of healthy forces seeking patiently each its proper place in the State. In war the Swiss first wrested their liberties from military tyrants, and then supplied all Europe with soldiers, and soldiers of the best. In peace they have contributed their share to European science, their national education is probably the best in the world, and in trade they hold their own with the best. Such as the nation is, such will be an army which is fed by the nation's best energies; and, as a matter of fact, there is a remarkable consensus as to its efficiency on the part of unbiassed foreign experts. Commandant Manceau (*"Armées Etrangères,"* 1900, p. 316) judges that it "need not fear to measure itself, if need be, on its own territory, against any other army that can be named";\* and, in fact, with France on one side and Germany on the other, this small nation does not fear. She faced Bismarck in the Wohlgemuth affair with an uncompromising directness contrasting strongly with our recent experiences in Samoa and at Delagoa Bay. It is a far cry from this to the "no army could possibly save us," urged by our Liberal leader in a Parliament that stands for forty millions of people, and urged without one saving

\* For other equally strong praise from distinguished German, French, Austrian, and English officers, see Manceau, pp. 333-336; Bebel, pp. 61 foll.; Adams and Cunningham, chap. xi. ad. fin. Manceau quotes from an article in the *Times* by the English military expert who followed the manoeuvres in the autumn of 1897; I subjoin three sentences extracted from his translation: "Il est impossible de parler de l'armée suisse sans risquer de paraître trop louangeur à ceux qui n'ont pas eu l'occasion de constater de quoi il est capable. . . . Il n'y a certainement pas une armée au monde qui puisse amener un Anglais à de réflexions plus sérieuses. *En la voyant à l'œuvre, il ne sera pas tenté de demander comme ailleurs, si elle n'impose pas au pays des charges écrasantes.*"

word of shame or remorse, to persuade us of the uselessness of calling on the whole nation to bear its burden of self-defence !

Here is food for thought to true Liberals and true Conservatives too : that is, to all thinking men. Those who follow blindly after a party leader or a party watchword are no true men at all ; they are simply the dead counters with which clever politicians gamble and play tricks. A true Englishman will accept a wise measure even from a man whom he hates, or even under a name of deservedly evil associations. The man who, without having studied the action of compulsory service in an essentially free state, loathes it merely on account of its name, is like an ignorant boy loathing the idea of a cold bath from his recollections of compulsory soap and water in early childhood, ruthlessly rubbed into mouth and nose and eyes. The Swiss Liberal, into whose daily life this service enters—even the most sensitive, whose flesh may still shrink a little from the chill and the shock—knowing that it is one of his most healthy and bracing duties, plunges in almost always with positive pleasure, and always without serious misgiving. And it must be remembered that the Swiss Liberal, in matters political and social, is at least as advanced as his British brother. He would be quite as ready to admit that, if the choice were really between a possible invasion on the one hand and a definite backward step from the goal of freedom on the other, it might be better to risk the invasion. But he knows, from having tried it, that the only true liberty is St. Paul's—that in asserting our freedom from duty we fall unavoidably under a servitude to evil ; that, in short, an honest but subordinate artisan is a far freer man than the irresponsible tramp for whom all roads lead in the long run to the workhouse.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

“Our system, with its presupposition of unreasoning, unintelligent obedience, with its promotion by seniority and not by merit, militates against good generalship. . . . In an army where the system lives in each man each man is capable of being a general. . . . The Boer army has no great general, its officers and men are untrained ; nevertheless, there is a great deal of practical military sense and alertness of mind distributed through the whole mass.”—*Times* Special Correspondent at Cape Town, March 27th, 1900.

“Il convient de louer dans cette armée [*i.e.* the Swiss] un esprit d'initiative

qui s'allie d'une façon curieuse (et que nous sommes portés à trouver un peu déconcertante) au sentiment de subordination. . . . Des règlements d'exercices très souples, débarrassés de tout superfluité, des manœuvres parfois incorrectes, mais toujours inquiétants et réalisant ce que le grand Frédéric appelait 'l'ordre par le désordre,' voilà par quoi sont mises en œuvre les belles qualités personnelles du soldat suisse. Les résultats sont remarquables."—Manceau, "Les Armées Etrangères," Paris, 1900.

YET prejudices, however vague, cannot be met but by definite evidence; and, anxious to convince myself that I was not mistaken in discrediting the cogency, in this case, of those moral and educational objections with which, in principle, I thoroughly sympathise, I paid a special visit to Switzerland in order to collect fresh and unimpeachable testimony on the spot. There, while taking every occasion of making indirect inquiries, I was also able to procure interviews with, or written information from, many well-informed gentlemen of very different occupations, ages, and shades of political thought. These were a member of the National Council (who is also the leader of the National Radical party), four colonels,\* a major-instructor, four clergymen (two of whom were university professors and three chaplains in the army), two other university professors, the editors of a Conservative and of a Social-Democratic newspaper, two bankers, two other gentlemen engaged in commerce, the head master of a private school, and last, but not least, the Labour Secretary.† Five of these gentlemen were also captains or lieutenants in different arms of the army. They represented, as the list itself will suggest, very various shades of political opinion, and most of them have been kind enough to revise the proof of the following questions and answers, which sum up the essential results of my inquiries.

I. It is sometimes feared in England that even the most modified form of compulsory service might contain dangerous germs of militarism. Does the experience of Switzerland give the least countenance to these fears?

None whatever. The misgivings expressed in our two Chambers by those who opposed the new Constitution of 1874‡ were roused

\* Except that one general is elected in time of war, there is no higher rank than colonel in the Swiss army.

† For this gentleman's recognised position as representative of the working classes in Switzerland, see Adams and Cunningham, pp. 276-7.

‡ For a fuller account of these debates, see below, p. 40.



not by the principle of *compulsion*, which the nation has always accepted, but by a cantonal distrust of the proposed *centralisation*. It is probable that such fears, even then, were rather assumed for party purposes, but in any case the twenty six years' experience of a more strongly organised army has given them the direct lie.\*

II. Can it be said that there is even the nucleus of a party which would dare to make the abolition of compulsory service one of its watchwords?

A practically unanimous *No*, as emphatic from Social Democrats as from Conservatives. At Zürich, perhaps the most Radical town in Switzerland, I heard no qualification of this denial; only in the most populous parts of French Switzerland I heard of a certain opposition on extreme Socialist lines, starting from the thesis that all war is immoral, and working mainly by an appeal for a reduction of national expenses.†

III. Is there the least cause to fear an increase of Jingoism or Chauvinism as the result of training a whole nation in the use of arms?

\* It is instructive to find the German Socialist, Bebel (p. 60), singling out as one of the main advantages of the modern Swiss system that it "would make *coups d'état* impossible" if introduced into Germany. In English history the "conscripted" Militia is always found loyal, and was in fact looked upon as the national protection against the disorderly tendencies of feudal or mercenary forces. (Prof. T. F. Tout in the "English Historical Dictionary," p. 730.)

† The writer of an able article in the *Spectator* (February 3rd) argues that compulsory service would give a definite grievance, and thus a focussing point, to the Socialism which is at present so vague in England. But Zürich is far fuller of Socialists (mostly inoculated from Germany) than any English town of its size, yet Zürich Socialists accept the principle of compulsory service, which thus binds them to the rest of the community, instead of separating them. I may say here that even what I have written above in the text seems exaggerated to two of my Swiss informants, university professors, who would answer the general question (No. II.) with a categorical "Certainly not," and only add that "certains socialistes se plaignent (pour des motifs électoraux) du rôle influent des chefs militaires dans la politique." The opponents of the principle of compulsory military service in Switzerland certainly cannot be reckoned at 1 per cent. of the voters; and what measure could ever be carried if we shrank from the possibility of "focussing the discontent" of 1 per cent. of our people? Is it not rather an advantage that faddists should focus their efforts upon points which the healthy man will not even treat as matters for discussion?

On the contrary, experience teaches us that a citizen army, officered by citizens, is the best safeguard against Jingoism.\*

IV. Does the Swiss system seriously trammel trade and industry?

The burden which it throws upon the nation is cheerfully borne for the sake of the results obtained.† The Labour party thoroughly accepts the principle of compulsion, while employers say that, on the whole, it makes their men more intelligent workers; and all point to the plain fact that Switzerland is quite in the front rank of the world's commerce and industry.‡ There are, of course, hard cases sometimes, but these are quite exceptional, and the Labour Secretary, Herr Hermann Greulich, assured me emphatically that it was in no sense a national grievance.

V. What is the physical effect of the service on the people?

So excellent that, if for any conceivable reason the military system should be abolished, it would be necessary to invent something to take its place as an instrument of national physical education.§

VI. What is the moral effect of this short course of barrack and camp life?

On the whole, excellent also. The great majority of parents have no anxieties about barrack life, beyond those inseparable from

\* So also argues the Socialist Bebel, p. 60.

† See also Manceau, p. 335.

‡ By a curious coincidence, a writer in the *Globe* of March 2nd holds up the Swiss workman as a model for the English in "efficiency of work" and "standard of design."

§ A major-instructor of cavalry told me how he was once asked to keep a special eye on the son of very rich parents, who was considered delicate. They had tried everything—sent him round the world—he still seemed delicate. The major, being specially busy, forgot all about his promise, until at the end of the three months the "delicate" boy, who was quite aware of what had been done, came to thank him for having taken no notice, and added: "I never in my life felt healthy until now." The Swiss soldier is extremely well fed, has little brain work, and a very great deal of hard open-air exercise. As Colonel Secretan points out (*Gazette de Lausanne*, August 28th, 1899), the military service, and especially the autumn manœuvres, ensure to every citizen that which rich men are content to buy at a high price—fresh air, exercise, and freedom from business cares. For the influence of the service on gymnastics, school drill, and voluntary open-air exercise, see below, p. 38.

the age of the recruits (twenty) and their first entrance into the world ; while the discipline is universally recognised as an important factor in the formation of character. The Swiss are agreed, *without distinction of party*, that the healthy *camaraderie* engendered by the service is a most valuable factor in the national education.

This question is naturally a delicate one ; yet the answers I received were more definitely reassuring than I had expected. On one point all my informants were quite at one—that such accusations as those of M. Urbain Gohier, whether they give a true picture of French barrack life or no, could not by any conceivable stretch be applied to Swiss military life.\*

Nearly all my informants were parents whose sons were or had been in the army, and such regrets as I heard were from those who had had a son rejected. Several said outright that, quite apart from military reasons, they would gladly send their sons to the barracks simply as a healthy introduction to the school of life. The two least unhesitating assurances I received were from two of the four clergymen whom I consulted—one a university professor, both of them regimental chaplains, and excellently qualified to speak on the subject. Neither of them could have altogether subscribed to the sentiment which I have just quoted ; they pointed out that the same experience which braces a morally strong youth may be dangerous for a weak one. They spoke of these dangers in very much the same words as those in which a careful English parent would feel bound to qualify a general assertion as to the influence on the character of such freedom as is enjoyed by our undergraduates at the universities. Yet both were perfectly satisfied with the Swiss army principle, and one ended his letter with the words, “I am one of the staunchest supporters of our military service.” The other, in reply to a question, answered that he would rather send a boy of

\* In fact, the comparison is carefully excluded by M. Gohier's own words. He writes (“L'Armée contre la Nation,” p. 18), “*une année de service, à vingt ans, n'est pas malsaine ; elle dégourdit, elle fortifie le cher garçon . . . Trois années de caserne, en France, perdent un jeune homme.*” It is the length of service, and the abundant idleness of those three years, which constitute the great danger ; whereas the Swiss recruit does at most three months, and seldom more than six weeks, and that time so filled up with hard physical work that when his long day is over he is generally glad to sit quietly over a glass or two of beer and then turn in.



twenty to the barracks than one of fourteen to a large boarding school.\*

I have dwelt rather longer on this question because it is from the nature of the case more difficult to answer off-hand than any of the others, and I have tried to represent fairly all that was said to me, even at the risk of giving an exaggerated impression of such qualifications as were here and there added to an answer which, on the whole, was thoroughly reassuring and satisfactory.†

VII. Is there any fear lest this discipline should weaken the individual's independence of character, and tend to reduce him to a machine?

On the contrary, with its practical experience of life, it tends rather to make him more resourceful and more self-reliant.‡

VIII. Has it any tendency to weary the citizen, and to disgust him with things military?

\* I had better, perhaps, quote the exact words of the comment which this gentleman passes on the rough draft sent for his approval:—"C'est plutôt sur la question des mœurs que nous avons conversé. Vous n'avez en effet demandé si j'aurais plus d'inquiétude, à ce point de vue, à envoyer mon fils au service militaire tel que nous l'avons, ou dans un grand collège de plusieurs centaines d'élèves. J'ai répondu qu'étant donné un jeune homme bien disposé, je craignais moins pour lui le service militaire—d'abord parce que le jeune homme y entre plus âgé, ensuite parce que le temps est plus court, et 3° parce que les choses s'y passent davantage au grand jour."

† Another professor and regimental chaplain, for instance, begins his answer with the words: "La vie militaire ne fait pas courir de danger à la morale de la nation."

‡ Quite incidentally, and in reply to another question, one gentleman drew between the mechanical obedience of a German clerk and the more independent ways of a native clerk very much the same distinction which would be drawn by the English business man. Again, the reader will note several instances in this pamphlet of the liberal-minded common-sense with which the army laws are worked. The "Wallenstadt Incident" of October last shows clearly the essentially civic character of Swiss army discipline. The instructors had used needlessly insulting language to certain soldiers during drill. The complaint was made in due military course, but the officers whose duty it was to hear it were also the officers complained of, and the complaint received no notice. Thereupon the newspapers attracted public attention to the case, which was taken up by the civil powers. The higher military authorities, having ascertained by searching inquiry that the officers had in fact exceeded their duty, reprimanded a major and punished some of the subordinates with a few days' arrest. This alone might suffice to show how utterly groundless was the fear of "militarism" expressed thirty years ago by the defenders of the old system.

Its general tendency is very strongly the other way. There are few national institutions which, on the whole, command more enthusiasm and affection than the army.\*

The foregoing, then, is a summary of the opinions of twenty well-informed Swiss gentlemen—most of them, as my readers will have seen, of distinguished ability—on the subject of the Swiss army. However much they may differ on other subjects, on this point they are all agreed—that you can train a body of soldiers so enormous as practically to secure even a small country from invasion, not only without harm to the nation itself, but actually by a perfectly simple process, which in producing better soldiers produces also better citizens. That this is no vain boast any traveller may verify for himself by mere patient, sympathetic observation. We Britons are justly proud of our country; and when travelling abroad we are apt—perhaps a trifle too apt—to find materials for comparisons still more comforting to our patriotism. Yet a short conversation on army affairs with half a dozen intelligent Swiss citizens would be calculated to affect the most complacent patriot of us all with a real sense of humiliation. In one sense no nation has a better right to be proud of its Army than we—in the sense, that is, that no nation has better soldiers. But we, the nation, what right have we to be proud of those from whom we hold ourselves persistently aloof? Even if we do not share the too common conviction that a Briton's duty ends with paying his war taxes and sending Tommy off with a drink to South Africa; still, at the best, the Army is merely an institution

\* See also the evidence adduced below that there is far more *volunteer* army work done by these “conscripted” Swiss than by us “free” Britons. I append here a criticism from an eminent Radical politician, in consideration of which I felt bound to recast the above sentence (originally expressed rather more absolutely) into its present form:—“It seems to me that your last sentence goes a little too far in its assertion that *no* national institution commands such enthusiasm as the army. No inconsiderable number of Swiss complain at times of what they call ‘militarism,’ by which they mean (1) that they think the higher officers are sometimes the champions of un-democratic ideas, and (2) that the military budget has swollen to undue proportions. *We are all supporters of the principle of compulsory service*; but we do not all agree on the details of its application.” The italics are my own. The reader will note, firstly, the unimpeachable testimony to the thorough acceptance by the nation of the principle of compulsory responsibility for home defence, and, secondly, that what some Swiss think undue “militarism” is radically different from the serious evils which are complained of under that word in other Continental nations.

which we admire from a distance, and which contains a greater or smaller number of our relations and friends—in its most brilliant achievements we do but share by proxy. It is even possible for a man, believing himself a good patriot, to feel no special regard for the national Army. Not so in Switzerland, where the ordinary citizen knows that he himself is part of it all, and loves it with the instinctive love of his own flesh and blood. Hence that inseparable combination of pride in the country and pride in the army, in the face of which it is difficult even for a Briton to preserve an attitude of calm superiority. Yet Switzerland has a better lesson for us than merely one of humiliation for undue self-complacency. Her quiet trust and pride in an army which can tempt her to no aggression, while it is practically invincible for home defence, is one of those experiences which raise one's faith in human nature, one of those facts which mark a definite upward step in the world's civilisation. For certainly, in the history of mankind, later ages will be able to read plainly a lesson to which national differences and political prejudices seem to have rendered our own century singularly blind. It will be seen how, while in some nations self-defence seemed inseparable from autocracy, and from a militarism which puts the citizen's life at the mercy of any reckless officer in a public brawl, or which deprives even the highest civil tribunal of all power to defend him against open illegalities under the guise of military laws; while other nations, again, trusted still in rusty makeshift methods which compel them to patch, and reorganise, and change front as best they can in the very throes of war—how in the meantime this people of Switzerland solved the problem with complete success, and organised an army most effective for self-defence, in a country passionately devoted to political and personal liberty.

It seems too good to be true. How can it be that so simple a device was never thought of before? But it was thought of, at one of the most glorious periods of our history, and practised still, in a rude, old-world way, within the memory of living men.\* Why,

\* No doubt a very great cause of such prejudice as exists in England against compulsory service is due to the antiquated and unjust form of the Militia ballot, a form impressed on it in the still barbarous days of 150 years ago—in the days when the first Paymaster of the Forces who refused to build up a colossal fortune by robbing the officers and men was looked upon as a miracle of honour—and retained, with characteristic British conservatism, to this day. But the injustices of



then, does it seem so strange to this generation? For the same simple reason which makes us so wasteful in our households: we are a little spoiled by a great wave of prosperity. We possess half the world, and until last November we thought we could hold it with our little finger; there is still rather too much of the tendency to believe that we can do it with one hand. And a misconception, natural enough among the people, but unpardonable among those who profess to enlighten them in the daily and weekly papers—a misconception does exist among us with regard to the Swiss army as gross as that under which most Continental writer labours with regard to ours. We smile when they speak of the “British mercenaries,” and thus attempt to class our soldiers with the brutal hirelings of barbarous ages; yet a Swiss citizen has an equal right to smile at phrases such as “veiled conscription,” which are meant to recall that tribute of blood enacted by Napoleon from France, and by our press-gangs from the British Isles, or at least the three weary years spent in modern Continental barracks. We have seen already how the services differ so enormously in length that this alone would almost amount to a radical difference, and is indeed treated as such by all critics of “conscription” in its exaggerated forms. But there is, by the side of this, a more radical difference still.

Certainly one of the most serious misgivings to which most Continental armies give rise is that based on the fear of “militarism.” Recent events in France have made all Europe very much alive to that danger, and it is therefore doubly important to note that in this matter the Swiss system differs from the others not only in degree, but essentially in quality. The Swiss army is officered almost exclusively, as will be seen presently, by men who are citizens first and soldiers afterwards; men who have all risen from the ranks, and who cannot forget their brotherhood with the men whom they command.

For it must be noted that when we hear of an antagonism between the army and the nation in Continental countries the word “army” simply means *the officers*. The *privates* are not against the nation; on the contrary, it is they who *are* the nation, for those who are at

the Militia ballot are no more essential to the principle of compulsory defence than are the injustices of Continental militarism. England simply needs a *modern* form of a sound old law.

any given moment with the colours (and therefore soldiers first and citizens afterwards) are at most not one-tenth of those who, being at that moment in private life, are therefore citizens first and soldiers afterwards. If it were only for the privates, militarism would be, if possible, more unlikely abroad than it is in England. But this is, unfortunately, not all; for here comes in a fresh fact which hopelessly outweighs the first. Quite apart from the citizen soldiers, and separated from them for life by carefully fostered artificial as well as natural boundaries, stands a numerous and compact caste of officers, who not only have absolute power over that tenth of soldiers in active service, but who also—partly through habits of past obedience, partly through fear of future control—wield a crushing influence over all the other nine-tenths—that is, over the whole nation. This caste, from the mere fact of its lifelong professional separation from the rest, cannot fail to have separate interests that conflict with those of the nation. We know, for instance, that if our own farmers or sugar-refiners could have their way there would be very radical changes in British policy. Therefore, so long as the nation has an army at all, the interest and the honour of the country must be subordinated again and again to that of the “army”—*i.e.* of the officer clique. This is the “militarism” made disproportionately conspicuous in France by the Dreyfus affair, but perhaps quite as deeply felt, though more carefully concealed, in other great Continental nations.

Now, the Swiss officer is always taken from the ranks, and, as a rule, by only one step at a time through all the non com. and subaltern grades.\* He receives no fixed salary, but simply daily pay while called out on army work; which time, of course, amounts only to a small fraction of his life.† He must have his own civil business or profession to live by, and this single condition, if there were no other, binds army and nation indissolubly together.

The letter of the law compels every citizen, during his years of service, to undertake any duty for which he is named; but the law provides also that the choice shall be made *strictly by merit*, and not

\* For instance, in the case of a foreign officer who applied for a post of instructor, there was no way of securing him but by bidding him first be naturalised, and then go through his recruit-school with the greenhorns of twenty; which, in fact, he did.

† The only strictly “professional” soldiers, with a fixed yearly salary, are about 200 instructors, and about 100 of the highest grades—administrators, etc.

by seniority. Now, there is seldom lack of competition for the vacancies, and nothing would be easier for a soldier than to avoid distinguishing himself sufficiently to run the risk of promotion. Nothing would be easier; but I was assured over and over again, and have no difficulty in believing it, that there is no serious practical difficulty of that kind.\* No doubt the rigour of the law is tempered by the sound common-sense of a people educated by centuries of self-government; and a man who finds it already hard to make both ends meet at home will not be called upon to sacrifice any more of his time for the army, if only for the simple reason that such compulsion would defeat its own ends, forcing upon the man a task to which he could not do justice, and therefore upon the army an officer who could not do it credit. For the officer's additional work is no contemptible burden; a cavalry lieutenant was good enough to reckon up for me the time that his grade had cost him, and it turned out that in four years he had already done more than double that amount of work which, spread over twenty-five years, would have earned a private his release from the army. Yet there is, on the whole, no difficulty in obtaining officers, and in some cases the competition is very keen. Can it be reasonably doubted that we should have the same experience in England? Give a chosen proportion of the people sufficient compulsory soldiering to show them the healthy manliness of the thing, throw open all grades to competition by merit; and you will find better fish in your net than you ever dreamed of. In the Swiss army, as in any competition whatever, the higher and better fed and more educated classes must have a long start; † but no start which resolution and real merit cannot overhaul. To anyone who has had the privilege of conversing with a number of Swiss officers it is evident enough that the system does, as a matter of fact, find out a high class of men.

As our Liberal ideas have already been rudely shaken by the personal compulsion inflicted upon honest citizens to help in safeguarding the existence of the country, so here our Conservative ideas

\* On the contrary, the only complaints I heard were that a young man who has to work hard for his living finds it difficult to gain the promotion of which he may be ambitious; in other words, that many who are anxious to volunteer for the hard extra work of an officer are prevented by those inequalities which, for good or for evil, are inherent in every department of our social system.

† See the note just above, on this page.



are shocked at the thought—not that a millionaire may find himself drilling cheek-by-jowl with an artisan (for that kind of thing, thank Heaven! is already not unknown to our Volunteers)—but that, while the millionaire might vegetate in the ranks all his life, the artisan might rise to the highest military posts. Yet this is what happens sometimes in Switzerland, and the nation is even proud of it, for it means that it has got hold of an officer who, in native military worth, must have been at least ten times as good as the neglected millionaire to have distanced him like that, in spite of the handicap. This, too, is the millionaire's view, and he accepts the facts with not ungenerous resignation; and, on the whole, both men are the better for it, and the nation too has reaped a solid gain. Again, the same qualities which enable the scratch man to run through his field like this in the army stand him generally in good stead in the race of life. At twenty he was a private and an artisan; at thirty, a captain and already his own master; at forty-five, colonel in the army and a thriving man in the town. The one work helps the other; and, by a double channel, merit forces its way to the fore. Here, again, the Swiss militia system shows itself one of the most powerful and beneficent factors in the true education of the people.

How cheerfully this extra burden of hard work is borne by the officers can only be realised by personal intercourse with the men who bear it. One of the Divisional Commanders, for instance, is also a manufacturer; his four sons are officers, from lieutenant upwards. At the last manœuvres all these five were called out together. One or two of them could doubtless have got the service put off to some other time—for when you have so willing an army you can afford to make these little concessions, and I came across several instances of such consideration for civil requirements. But no; all these five officers turned out together, and were proud to do so, as well they might be. And the business does not suffer in the long run. Man is a queer animal—coddle him, and he will complain when he is forced to stir his little finger; tax all his manly energies, and he will doubly tax himself. These Swiss men of business, who spend so much time and energy on army affairs, run neck and neck with us in commerce and industry. These uncompromising Liberals, who see no harm in compelling all classes to meet on equal terms in the barracks and in the ranks, simply enjoy the compulsion which the somewhat enervated English Liberal thinks it his duty to

"loathe"; and a "conscripted" soldier knows no better fun than to volunteer for extra work. We have already seen that the mere volunteer shooting in Switzerland comes (in proportion) to more than treble of ours; and let us here note that the Swiss officers (com. and non-com.) form a fraction of the population just about twice as great as the usual grand total of our British Volunteers—rank and file and officers.\* Again, when a man knows he will have to serve he is glad to anticipate it at school; and Switzerland is emphatically the land of gymnastics and cadet corps.† These facts ought completely to reassure those who fear lest compulsory service should numb volunteer efforts. On the contrary, the whole experience of human nature shows that a strictly compulsory minimum is the best possible foundation for a voluntary maximum. We force a child to read, for instance; and then, directly he can do so with any facility, he finds his own pleasure among books and newspapers. *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*; and whereas, when we go round begging as a favour, we find that nearly every man has his land, or his oxen, or his wife to prevent him, yet those whom we finally gather in from the highways and hedges

\* The officers and non-coms. of Switzerland, actives and reserves, amount in all to about 44,000 men.

† In 1898 nearly 160,000 school-boys, between nine and fifteen, practised gymnastics regularly—this, in English numbers, would make over two million. Again, numbers which in England would come to 68,000 did a yearly average of more than sixty military drills, twice the number thought sufficient to render an English Volunteer "efficient." ("Bericht des eidgenössischen Militärdepartements," 1898.) All this is still to a great extent voluntary, both on the part of school authorities and of boys; yet no less a Radical than the Labour Secretary, himself a workman, volunteered a strong plea for universal compulsion in this matter, as the only businesslike way of carrying out what was as important an element in the national education as the three R.'s themselves. In fact, the reason why foreign experts are so astounded to find how much can be done with the Swiss soldier during his very brief term of service is simply because this compulsory minimum is so enormously supplemented by the good will and the extra efforts of the people. Compare also a most interesting series of letters (in the *Spectator* for January 20th, January 27th, and March 10th) from Mr. J. G. Legge, H.M. Inspector of Reformatory and Industrial Schools; Mr. A. C. Burmester, a manager of one of these schools; and Mr. R. F. Cholmeley, assistant-master at St. Paul's. All these gentlemen bear independent testimony to the fact that, with English boys at any rate, a reasonable amount of military training enormously develops the taste for more.

discover, to their astonishment, that they have been forced in for their own real happiness.

For the sake of our present voluntary Regular Army—may its shadow never grow less!—it is surely devoutly to be wished that all the fittest of the population should be compelled to a certain minimum of drill and rifle practice. And, for the sake of the whole country, something must soon be done to heal the present divorce between military affairs and business affairs. An army depends more and more for its efficiency, as the world grows older, on its purely business organisation; and the more the business talent of the country is brought into touch with military affairs the better it will be for both parties.\* Our sailor is proverbially a handy man; not so our soldier. If the business intellect of the nation were brought to bear a little more directly upon military affairs, it is certain that many “insoluble” difficulties would melt away, as the gun-carriage difficulty melted before Captain Percy Scott. This has always been the case in citizen armies; and the Huntingdonshire brewer who

\* See, in a recent number of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, an article on “The National Call for Men of Business,” by a Conservative M.P. Again, the *Morning Post* of March 26th publishes a complaint from Bloemfontein that, owing to the lack of veterinary surgeons, and the friction which would ensue if a batch of civilian “vets.” were sent out to supplement them, we not only have lost but shall apparently continue stolidly to lose large numbers of those horses which at the present moment, for mere military purposes, are more valuable to us than men. See a letter of Mr. Baillie-Grohman’s to the *Westminster Gazette* of March 20th, quoting from an officer who reports that “at least one-third” of the deaths among horses on board his ship were for the same reason. Again, Mr. Baillie-Grohman sends a piece of brown paper extracted from a soldier’s boot which had been incautiously used in wet weather. In a really national army a man is given as nearly as possible the same work which he does at home; so that, with this system, we could have had no difficulty about sending to South Africa ten or twenty times our present number of “vets.,” trustworthy men in their profession, and used to Army ways. As to the boot scandal, again, there is no matter more carefully seen to in the Swiss army. The recruit has to supply his own boots; but the War Office, knowing that a lame man can neither march nor fight, is so exacting in its requirements that nearly all soldiers prefer to buy the army boots—these cost *only ten francs a pair* (strict cost price), and are so uniformly excellent that the Swiss often buy them for mountaineering. Imagine an English Alpinist equipping himself with Army contract boots! The public will agree with the “officer of high standing” quoted in Mr. Baillie-Grohman’s letter, “Kruger has great luck, having such a rotten War Office to deal with!” Or rather, Kruger knew beforehand what we have been rather more slow to realise.



organised an army even comparable to that of Edward III. is only the representative of a large class perfectly well known to historians, but generally ignored by purely military writers.\*

To all those who may object to any radical reform of our military system, and who believe that we need only "patch up" in order to find ourselves all right in the end, there could be no more instructive lesson than the debate in the Swiss Chambers on the new Constitution of 1874. This Constitution aimed, *inter alia*, at organising the army into one whole, from the collection of cantonal armies which it then practically was. There were many, as usual, who believed in "muddling on" instead. These men complained that a stronger central organisation would bring upon the country all the evils of a "standing army"; that the nation would find itself under "military satraps" wielding a "Prætorian Guard"; that the sabre would weigh heavy in the scales of justice; that it might even arm some ambitious politician for a *coup d'état*. Men argued that the soldier, if better drilled, would "lose his individuality"; "the present enthusiasm for the army would be wearied and blunted"; there would no longer be such "healthy rivalry" as is now kept up by a system of patchwork and often conflicting jurisdictions; in short, the change would "run counter to all wholesome old Swiss traditions"—everything, in fact, was raked up which might seem to lend some colour of support to an antiquated, happy-go-lucky system. Not but that the evils were notorious, and often insisted upon by critics—the conflict of authorities, the impossibility of fixing responsibility for failure, the waste of money and energy for mere lack of organisation, and, worst of all perhaps, the facility of juggling with

\* The American Civil War, fought almost entirely between citizen armies, was more fruitful in inventions of every kind, even purely military, than any since the citizen wars of the French Revolution. For the overwhelming evidence which can be brought to show how much fighting and organising talent is latent among civilians, see Bebel, "Nicht Stehendes Heer" (Stuttgart, 1898), and Bleibtreu, "Der Zar Befreier" (Stuttgart, 1898) *passim*. Not only the numerical majority, but the most distinguished majority of the great French generals were either civilians, privates, or at most non-coms. at the outbreak of the Revolution. Gneisenau, the Prussian general who bears so much of the credit of his country's military resurrection after 1806, quoted the French citizen army as a model in this respect for Germany. (Bebel, p. 66.) Our Colonials have just taught us a similar lesson. See Spenser Wilkinson in the *Morning Post* of January 24th; and Sir George White's sympathetic testimony at Cape Town, March 27th.

the statistics, which ought to represent actual men and material, and the difficulty of checking such jugglery by effectual audit. In short, the Swiss system before 1874 laboured under a milder form of the same disorders which are so painfully apparent at the present moment in the English Army administration; and in Switzerland then, as among us to-day, there were men who represented these disorders either as the result of defects inherent in the otherwise admirable Swiss Constitution or as providential blessings in disguise.

And yet the Swiss had just passed, as we have, through a rude but healthy experience. The sudden outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war, by necessitating a sudden mobilisation of Swiss troops to guard the frontiers, had pitilessly exposed the weaknesses of a many-headed organisation. Not but that they, like us, had also some legitimate reason for pride, for in three days this small nation threw four divisions upon the Rhine border, and in a few more she had 20,000 men guarding her frontiers. The opponents of change flattered the nation with this recollection, and urged that a system by which (or even in spite of which) a sudden feeling of national emergency could produce such good results needed, at most, only a little patching up. But the sound sense of the nation determined to root out for ever so evident a principle of disorganisation and weakness; the new law was passed; and since then the army has made enormous progress in efficiency without losing anything of its popularity. Not even the wildest of faddists ever suggests nowadays a return to the old system in Switzerland.

The applicability of all this to our own case is too obvious for further remark. If only we could take the lesson to heart, and not allow ourselves, in spite of the present words of flattery as to our magnificent effort in transporting so splendid an army 6,000 miles from our shores, to forget that we have found our present army organisation not only deficient in its performances, but demonstrably false in those representations by which it has attempted to palliate the past and fain would lull us into security for the future!

## CHAPTER V.

"The Free Conservative leader, Herr von Kirchhoff . . . dissented from Herr Richter's anticipation that universal service would be adopted in England. That country was ruled by the Stock Exchange, and so long as this was the case there could be no question of universal service."—Report of debate on the German Navy Bill, in the *Times* for March 29th.

In the foregoing chapter I have attempted to give a clear idea of the actual working of the compulsory militia system in a thoroughly free country. The Swiss themselves find it difficult to conceive how a free country can have any other kind of army. They have no colonies, and in that way they can only dimly realise our necessities; but for mere home defence their eminently successful experience remains a true example for us. The only real freedom is to be master of one's passions and circumstances, instead of being controlled by them. How, then, can a nation enjoy its full freedom until, on the one hand, it enjoys its greatest possible security against violent interference from without, and until, on the other hand, it can be quite sure that the man in the street who shouts for war is fully aware of the personal risks which war must bring him? During these last six months the country has more than once shown tendencies to hysteria and nervous irritation which it is difficult to dissociate altogether from a suspicion of secret fear. If we had felt—not as a pious national boast, but as a matter resting on as definite statistics as the solvency of the Bank of England—that we need no more trouble ourselves about foreign interference than George Stephenson's engine about the "coo," then the national attitude might have been more dignified. We might have been spared the shame of reading that men had been mobbed and women hooted, and a well-meaning Quaker's windows broken by roughs; we could have afforded to treat any pro-Boer propaganda with the same tolerance as we allow to Nationalist orators in the House of Commons. Again, these last months have not been altogether reassuring in what they have shown us of national passions in conflict with national self-control. The same papers which were the loudest to bawl for war were the first to lose their balance at our first reverses. If there has been no



cry of "Nous sommes trahis!" there has, at least, been something sufficiently like it to pain sober Britons and to give our enemies a handle against us. A crowd emancipated at the very beginning of its teens from personal discipline, and feeding naturally on the most cheaply exciting and least responsible forms of literature, is not the crowd from which one could expect stolid calm in the face of national disappointment and possible personal loss. Can it be doubted that the nation would have been calmer if every other male had gone through enough discipline to sober him and give him patience to trust our officers for awhile, yet not enough to make him forget that these officers, chosen from among his comrades, are truly his best friends?\*

For the relation between officers and men in a truly national army resembles that between the boys at our English public schools and the masters whom in many cases they have known as comrades in the same school. Probably this thoroughly healthy relation is (now that our love of games threatens to degenerate into mere athleticism) the one feature of English education to which we can point with quite unqualified pride. There is not, and for generations there cannot be, anything quite like it in other countries; and for the formation of character among the richer classes this influence is simply priceless. In Switzerland the army does a great deal to spread among *all* classes this same healthy lesson of familiarity tempered by respect. Though composed of the most heterogeneous units—for the Italian and German Swiss are at least as wide apart in character and religion as our Saxon and Celt, and have not even the tie of a common language—yet the nation is at peace with itself;

\* The bracing effect of discipline on the Swiss in times of popular excitement is strikingly shown in a recent event which was related to me on the spot, and which is also told in Manceau, p. 346. There was a great strike at Geneva; the police were not enough to cope with it, and a very serious riot seemed imminent. Preliminary notice was given one day that the soldiers might be needed, and next day towards noon a battalion was called out by proclamation. Before the afternoon was out the whole battalion was under arms, supplied with ammunition, and ready for any service. These men had been called from their daily work, and about a third of them were themselves strikers, yet there is no doubt that the troops would, in case of real necessity, have done their duty. Naturally it was *not* necessary, and the prompt show of strength saved the town from bloodshed. One man only refused to turn out—a member of the Geneva Town Council and a Socialist. He was at once punished as the law provides; an anti-militarist in Switzerland is an even less formidable person than an English anti-vaccinationist.

and for this mutual tolerance the military service is very largely responsible. The men of old-world Catholic Schwyz, for instance, come to drill in Protestant Radical Zürich, and, as a Zürich gentleman remarked: "They look upon us at first as absolute foreigners, but gradually the service teaches them that we are all fellow citizens."

I have just spoken of our public schools, and on more than one important point the Swiss army lends itself to this same comparison. It forms a similar introduction, rough but not too rough, to the school of life; and the feelings of an anxious Swiss parent on first sending his son to the barracks closely resemble those of an Englishman parting with his for school—a healthy conviction that it is necessary and on the whole good for the boy, together with a trust that he will remain his father's child through it all. In the same way, again, it originates or fosters an indelible love of manly sport; gymnastics and shooting are its voluntary prelude, and shooting and outdoor exercise are kept up by the side of and far beyond the years of compulsory service. I was amused at having to explain to more than one of my interlocutors that the English are as fond of healthy exercise as the Swiss, but I could not help appreciating their doubts. They thought that a really manly nation, devoted to liberty and yet practical enough to distinguish between true and false freedom, could hardly so far have neglected that which, with its sobering sense of responsibility, must always be the most manly of all exercises. And to some extent I suppose they were right. The Militia ballot, with all its unfairness of detail, did at least represent a sound principle; yet, even at the lowest ebb of our national history, that principle would seem never to have been so completely forgotten as in these latter days—this glorious end of the Victorian Era, in which Englishmen are learning to play even their games by proxy, like the rabble of Imperial Rome. The wild passion for "khaki" which has raged among us for the past few months, side by side with a certain reluctance, in influential quarters at least, to face the idea of personal service, looks perilously like another and more serious symptom of the same tendency which brings 30,000 Britons together to watch the performances of their twenty-two professional representatives, in whose glory each spectator claims his share, though he has done nothing beyond paying his gate-money, and helping to mob the referee at the finish. At this rate the ideal

world of the British public would soon resemble a huge rat pit, in which every tax-payer is privileged to take a quiet seat, and watch our Regulars worry our enemies. This is scarcely a state of things which could exalt the nation, or be tolerated in the long run by the world at large.

But the splendid volunteer efforts of the past few months? They have indeed been admirable; yet the history of our Volunteers does not altogether reflect the persistency of purpose for which we are given credit, nor does it encourage the nation to rely upon them alone. There was an enormous volunteer effort in 1803; another equally enormous half a century later. Why did tens of thousands spring to arms in a few weeks in the year 1859? Simply because the earlier enthusiasm had died out altogether, and the 500,000 Volunteers of 1803 had vanished like smoke in those fifty years. A long period of peace had made the nation feel as if it had always done without them, just as we feel now that the idea of compulsion for the Militia is thoroughly un-English, the child of some modern alarmist's imagination. Nations have short memories on these points, and an ounce of permanent system, grown into the flesh and blood of the people, is worth a pound of sudden panic-bred effort, even apart from the fact that the nation can seldom be roused until the real crisis is over, or brought to believe that the same danger may come again. Do we not see this already, now that the tide in South Africa has turned? England breathes freely again, and in a few weeks more there will be voices to proclaim that, for real success, there is nothing like "muddling on" from year to year. The present almost incredible incoherence of conflicting systems is realised in all its fulness, we are told, only by the few who are actually behind the scenes; yet this incoherence will presently find its defenders, no longer on Lord Lansdowne's plea that any attempt to grapple with the present emergency on an effectual scale would bewilder the poor War Office into a lunatic asylum—no longer on Lord Salisbury's, that things ought to have been done, but it is all the lazy people's fault—or Sir Campbell's, that the most careful previous calculations too often fall hopelessly below what is really wanted; or Sir Bannerman's, that it is therefore folly to make any preparations beyond those which careful previous calculations have recommended. After these arguments of real statesmen, we shall presently hear the barefaced, cynically selfish plea of the man in the street: "There is no more immediate cause



for fear : the thing is pretty sure to last our time ; let us eat, and drink, and proclaim that there is no such generous, easy-going god as the good god Muddle, and the War Office is his prophet ! ”

And yet, where two or three are gathered together, we are made aware that there is in the nation a very different spirit to this, if only it could be turned to some use. Next to the first ill success of our arms, the deepest national disappointment has been the revelation of weakness—complacent, unabashed weakness—on the part of the Government in which we had trusted, and which is still the strongest we can hope for. There is, at least among the more educated classes of the nation, no lack of patriotism, of readiness for self-sacrifice, and of willingness to face hard facts. On the contrary, there has been deep sadness and bewilderment that nobody dare give us a definite task to do or facts to face, instead of mere diplomatic sophistries. Each man feels something of this in himself, he finds some sort of an echo among his little circle of friends ; the men who are ready at heart are hundreds of thousands—millions perhaps. Yet here we wander our aimless ways like sheep without a shepherd. If only all those good intentions could somehow be brought to a point before we have yet forgotten our suspense of months for the fate of Ladysmith, and before, by dint of mere talking the whole thing over backwards and forwards, we shall have grown into the belief that there is no more to be done, and that time will somehow set things right.

Ignorance and want of thought are, at best, but half excuses. Nature punishes them heavily, and no man dare teach that they are light in the sight of God. We commission our police to punish the man who carelessly leaves his doors or windows open through the night in a great town ; yet the guilt of tempting war is far more serious than that of tempting mere burglary. If it is true that the mere belief in our weakness made it impossible for us to obtain without bloodshed the redress of the Uitlanders’ helot disabilities, then there are thousands of men in England who cannot wash their hands clean of blood-guiltiness by merely repeating that they have hated this war. The men who hold, on carefully reasoned principle, that a just war is already an impossibility, are not one in ten thousand. The sickly sentimentalists who, without daring to take their stand on this principle, hope somehow to avoid war by shirking all preparation for it, simply bring themselves under the curse of the

lukewarm. It is they who, with their inconsistencies of theory and practice, act as convenient stalking-horses for the selfish, the lazy, the cowardly, whom it would be one of the best results of compulsory service to lick into some sort of manliness. Not only all so-called Imperialists, but all British voters except the infinitesimally few who would abandon our colonies to anyone who chooses to grab them—practically all of us, in fact—bear responsibilities which we can only fulfil by doing our best to maintain an Army and a Navy strong enough to scare off all foreign interference. For if at any future day, by showing an appearance of vulnerability to an invader, we tempt that conflict which a little foresight and self-sacrifice might have made impossible, then there must lie a heavy weight of blood-guiltiness on every soul which has not steadily faced the present question, and at least rejected it on the consistent plea that to fight is always wrong, however just the cause. The present war has shown the exaggerations of M. Bloch's theories, but, at least, it has abundantly proved what enormous odds modern weapons give to the defenders in any fight ; and when the golden era of universal peace does come, it can only be after every country in the world has put itself in a position to show the rest very plainly how little they could hope to gain by an attack. The truest peace, of course, preaches for itself ; but how many men do we know who are at peace even with themselves and with their families and surroundings, to begin with? Yet this inward leaven must first have leavened our most intimate relations before we can hope to see it dominate the intercourse of rival peoples. When we have peace in nearly all our homes, and between all parties in the nations themselves, then, no doubt, we shall be on the eve of an era of universal concord, Until then we cannot do better than keep peace between nations as we keep it still within our own borders—by a sufficient show of physical force to discourage even the most unruly elements of society from measuring themselves against that force. How satisfactorily and easily this can be done by a nation accustomed to self-government is shown by the fact that in Switzerland the only voices raised against the *principle* of a compulsory national army are those few which are also raised against war in any form whatever.

Nor could there be a more favourable time, here in England, for urging the advantages of a system so thoroughly suited to

the nation's manly energy, its self-control, and its love of true liberty—not the liberty of a gipsy or a tramp, but that of a man who bows his shoulders to an obvious duty, and finds a double reward in doing it. All parties are now extraordinarily united on the practical questions of the moment. Liberals vie with Conservatives in upholding the justice and necessity of this war, and Conservatives vie with Liberals in deploring that the Government should do so little towards national insurance. The Colonies have come to our help with an enthusiasm admirable even to our enemies, and we find on comparing notes with them that they do not hesitate to take the step from which we still shrink—we, who ought to have shown them the way! And yet there is in the nation both the material and the spirit for a magnificent citizen army, if only it could find an organiser. Thousands have volunteered for the front, thousands for home service; and hundreds of thousands would willingly drill, if they could see any security against the sheer waste of their efforts in the hands of an administration unable to make the least provision for a really national movement. What sane people would pour its whole energies into such a cracked vessel, patched up with shoddy and brown paper, as we know our present War Office to be? Nobody contributes willingly to a fund which is badly managed; and the Volunteer energies of Great Britain will never find their full development until we have a business-like system worthy of a business nation. We need an organisation which, in the first place, shall secure to all a compulsory minimum of training, as we already insist upon a compulsory minimum of elementary education. Secondly, we must assure such public interest in and surveillance over this organisation that all superabundant energies shall be ensured full play, instead of being snuffed out by officials whose worst bugbear is the volunteer desirous of fresh work. In short, we need to look at Switzerland, whose “conscripted” soldiers contribute voluntary works of supererogation far surpassing, in proportion, the whole Volunteer energies of Great Britain.

And I have tried to show that, however important the question of a national army is from the immediate point of view of home defence, it is almost equally important as a factor of political and social education. It brings home to the citizens a sense of serious responsibility; it renders impossible any conflict of interests between



the Army and the nation ; it is one of the strongest possible forces working towards national unity. Whatever risks of disunion may loom in the future—racial divisions, class divisions, divisions between labour and capital—that nation will be best equipped to meet the crisis which has already bound man to man by ties of daily personal intercourse ; by a system of open competition which shows the privileged classes that they cannot rest on their oars, and yet proves to the others that in any rearrangement of society those will be most likely to come to the front again whose ancestors pushed their way to the front before them ; above all, perhaps, by the recollection of patriotic duties performed side by side. Our own Highlands were never really nationalised until the greatest of our War Ministers raised the Highland regiments ; and no event, for years past, has done so much for Anglo-Irish relations as the partnership of brave men in this present campaign. The ordinary objections to a large conscripted army are disarmed altogether by the shortness of service in the Swiss army and their system of citizen officers. No European State can vie with Switzerland in the combination of instantly available defensive power and perfect national freedom ; none has a military system at the same time so simple and inexpensive and so perfectly adapted to the aspirations of a free and manly people.

We know that things cannot be allowed to go on as in the past ; nobody, apparently, is bold enough to assert that the nation can really insure itself against foreign invasion except by some form of compulsory service. Yet the nation at large are under the falsest possible impressions as to evils supposed to be inherent in every form of compulsory service, and statesmen, far from enlightening us, take pains to foster our delusion by arguments which partake even of dishonesty. If we have already become a people of sluggards and cowards, of course nothing can save us ; but under any other supposition what can we think of a Government which dare not appeal to us for a sacrifice far less than that which our ancestors bore, and than that which is borne at the present day by almost every self-respecting country of Europe ! Is it really, as Herr von Kirchhoff thinks, that England is ruled by the Stock Exchange, and therefore there is no chance of a national military system ; or, as Lord Salisbury is not ashamed to profess to think, that our young men are already emigrating in shoals for New York, for fear of a Militia

Ballot in England?\*

If those young men have any real existence, we can afford to send them away to New York with the nation's blessing. May they become good Americans; and go, when they die, to Paris! Living or dead, they are not wanted in these islands, where the Queen, at a moment's notice, could stamp out of the ground a million better men than they. But a vast force raised on the spur of the moment spells a terrible waste of money, and energy, and lives. There will always be clever statesmen like Dr. Leyds and Herr Kirchhoff who disbelieve in it until they see it; and Great Britain can never take her true place in Europe until she plainly shows the whole world that she does at last realise the necessity for a thoroughly organised national defensive army, and can rely on the manliness of her citizens to provide it.

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#### POSTSCRIPT.

AN interesting corroboration of what has been said above about the real feeling of the Swiss towards their Army has just come to hand. In the National Council debates on the Army estimates (March 27th and 28th last) a determined effort was made to obtain a reduction of the Military Budget. Three amendments were brought forward: (1) that the Budget be reduced to twenty-three million francs; (2) that it be reduced to twenty-four million francs; and (3) in vague terms, that some reduction be made. No. 2 was first preferred by a great majority to No. 1; then the mildest and most platonic, No. 3, was equally victorious over No. 2; and finally, even this attenuated amendment was rejected by sixty-eight votes to forty-eight. Two of the proposers were Socialists—one, M. Favon, of a very militant sort—yet each expressly disclaimed any wish to strike at the Army as an institution. M. Favon complained of "militarism";

\* House of Lords, Feb. 20. "There was a curious statement in the papers the other day, but I have not been able to trace it home. It was a statement that there was a sudden rush of young men, emigrants, arriving at New York. They were asked why so many people of the same age came at once, and they said, 'We understand that the ballot for the Militia is going to be introduced, and we wish to get out of the way in time.'"

and I quote the fullest report I can find of his words (*Gazette de Lausanne*, 28 Mars) as a pretty conclusive proof of the radical difference between the Swiss and the general Continental article. It must be remembered that these are the words of a Socialist, bringing forward a motion in the National Council by way of redeeming pledges made during his electioneering campaign among certain classes of the population of Geneva.

"M. Favon: Nous sommes tous d'accord sur la nécessité d'une défense nationale. Nous ne sommes pas encore arrivés à la paix universelle et je sais bien qu'on ne pare pas un coup de sabre avec un précepte de Platon.

"Mais il est incontestable que les abus du militarisme ont déterminé un mouvement anti-militaire à la fois justifié et dangereux. Il ne faudrait pas le laisser tourner à la désaffection et à l'amertume. Pour y parer, il suffit d'ailleurs de revenir de certaines exagérations manifestes.

"Ce mouvement populaire est, en effet, justifié et cela en partie, l'orateur veut s'en expliquer ouvertement, par la hauteur, on pourrait dire le dédain avec lequel, ici-même, on a répondu jusqu'à présent à ceux qui ont signalé au Conseil fédéral les abus du militarisme. On leur répond toujours comme du haut d'un patriotisme en péril et on se dispense, de la sorte, de répondre à leurs justes griefs. Cependant, on reconnaîtra bien qu'il est douloureux pour un peuple de devoir consacrer chaque année à l'armée des dizaines de millions qui pourraient plus utilement être voués à l'agriculture et à l'instruction, et de devoir construire des murs contre l'ennemi au lieu d'appliquer cet argent à améliorer nos maisons.

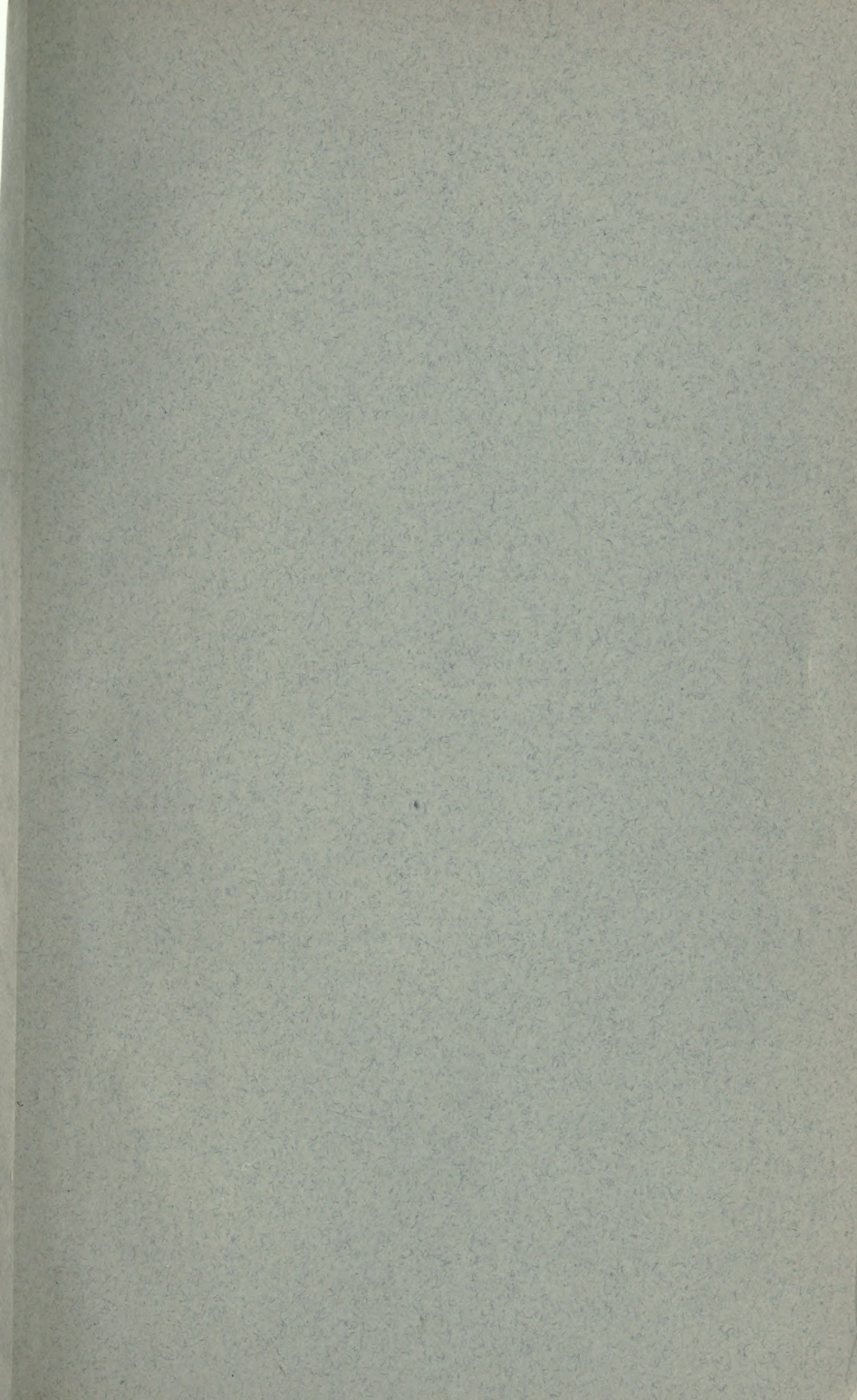
"L'orateur se plaint de ce que l'état-major a introduit dans l'armée des mœurs qui n'ont rien de républicain. Il règne dans nos hautes sphères militaires un esprit étrange. N'avons nous pas lu dans un journal sérieux que les assurances sociales sont des œuvres d'affaiblissement et d'amollissement et que nous ferions mieux de retourner aux mœurs de nos ancêtres qui combattaient à Morat et à Marignan? Singulier langage. Et M. le professeur Hilty n'a-t-il pas dit, dans le débat sur les petits chevaux, qu'il préférerait nos pères servant l'étranger l'épée à la main que les fils qui le servent la serviette sous le bras? C'est très joli, mais c'est de la poésie et l'orateur s'inscrit en faux contre ce propos. Le métier du sommelier qui nourrit les hôtes de notre pays est plus noble que celui du



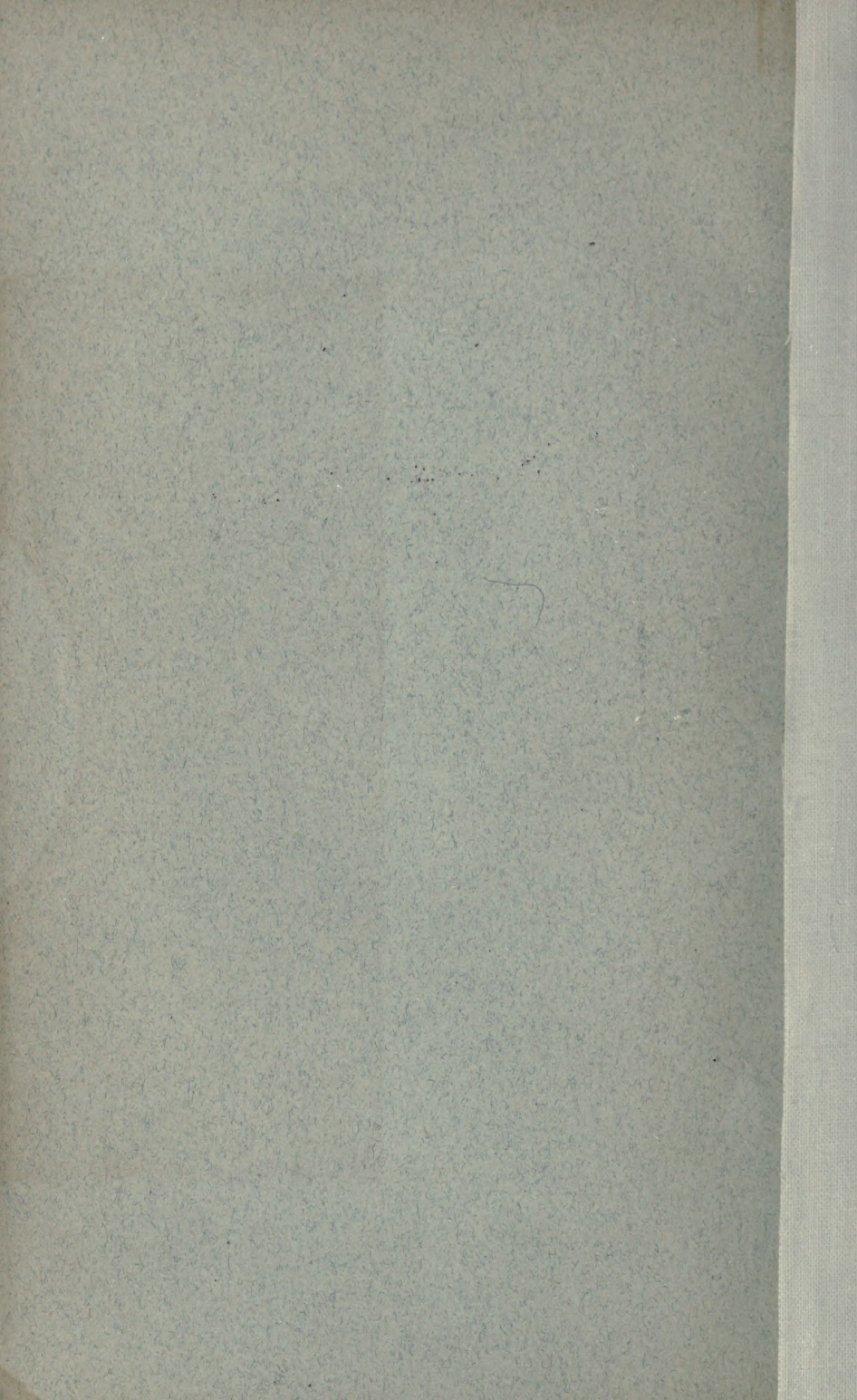
mercenaire qui loue son bras pour tuer l'étranger, et le couteau qui sert à découper un filet de bœuf est un outil plus utile qu'un sabre."

Nor are the newspaper comments on the debate less instructive than the speaker's own words. The *Bund*, the most prominent Radical organ, says that "M. Favon's speech bore the plain stamp of mere electoral expediency. . . . As to his vague tirades against *militairomanie*, they deserve no notice." And the Social Democratic *Züricher Post*, after a long comment in its weekly review on the decisive and merited defeat of the amendments, ends up with, "But here we are devoting all our space to militarism—which for us means an abundance of pleasant reminiscences of days that are no more, and a grateful recollection of excellent teachers."

It is, in fact, difficult to exaggerate the essential unity of the Swiss people on the general army question.







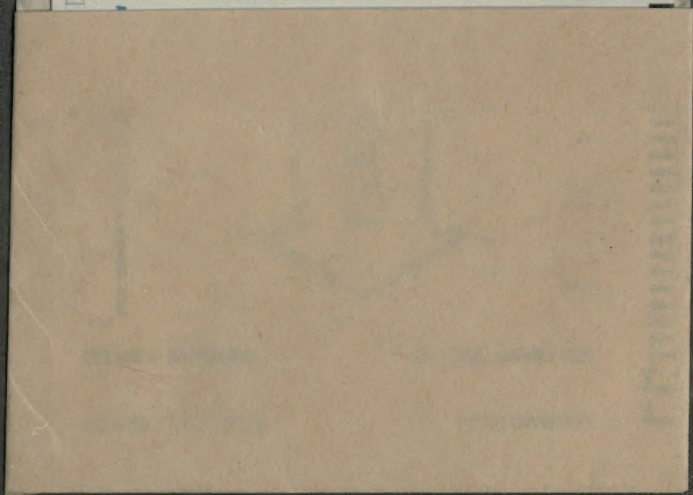
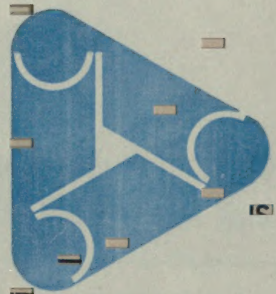


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